NATION

ISRO to launch PSLV-C62 on 12 January

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BUSINESS

RBI mulls 75% cap on bank dividend payout

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SPORTS

Ashes: Aussies set for win but Bethell hits sublime 100

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 8 JANUARY 2026 | THURSDAY | BENGALURU | 18 RAJAB, 1447 H | Vol 5 | Issue No 6 | Pages: 8

UNFILTERED

Delhi has heard the revolution of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev, when they threw the bomb against the deaf Congress government

—**Rekha Gupta,** Delhi CM, said in Delhi Assembly

Demolition drive near Delhi mosque turns violent

5 cops injured as mob pelts stones; Juvenile among 5 arrested

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Violence broke out during an anti-encroachment drive near the Faiz-e-Elahi mosque in Delhi's Ramlila Maidan area early on Wednesday after a crowd pelted stones at police personnel, injuring five of them.

Police said the incident occurred around 12.40am when a group of people, despite prohibitory orders, gathered near Turkman Gate and raised slogans against the police. According to the FIR registered at Hauz Qazi's Handni Mahal Police Station, the protest escalated into stone-pelting and attacks using glass bottles.

A senior police officer said Samajwadi Party MP Mohibbullah Nadvi was also present there.

To control the situation, police used mild force and teargas. Five people, including a 17-year-old juvenile, were taken into custody, while another 10–15 individuals were detained for questioning. Those arrested are Mohd Arib, 25; Mohd Kaif, 23; Mohd Kashif, 25; Mohd Hamid, 30; and the juvenile.

Police sources said the unrest was triggered by a social media post falsely claiming that the mosque was being demolished as part of the drive. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) was carrying out a demolition exercise on land adjoining the mosque and a nearby graveyard at Turkman Gate, following directions from the Delhi High Court.

MCD Deputy Commissioner Vivek Kumar said that no damage was caused to the mosque.

Violence will not be tolerated. I want to clearly state that Faiz-e-Elahi mosque is completely safe

—Ashish Sood, Delhi Home minister

Around 150 people gathered at the site in Turkman Gate. While most dispersed after persuasion, a section of the mob turned violent ***PHOTO: X***

According to police, around 100–150 people gathered at the site while the drive was underway. While most dispersed after persuasion, a section of the crowd turned violent, leading to injuries among police personnel. Investigators are examining whether the violence was spontaneous or a pre-planned attempt to disrupt the operation. A police source said one video that fuelled the tension was allegedly recorded by Khalid Malik, who urged people to come out of their homes in large numbers.

CCTV footage, social media videos, drone visuals and body-camera recordings are being analysed to identify other suspects. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 4 & 5

BJP ties-up with Cong, AIMIM in local body polls in M'rashtra

MUMBAI, 7 JAN

In a surprise post-poll development, the BJP's local units in two Maharashtra municipal councils forged alliances with ideological rivals Congress and AIMIM, triggering sharp reactions from state leaderships across parties.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said such arrangements violated party discipline and would not be accepted under any circumstances. Instructions had been issued to scrap such alliances, he added.

In Ambernath Municipal Council, the BJP joined hands with the Congress and Ajit Pawar-led NCP under the banner of Ambernath Vikas Aghadi to form the council leadership, sidelining ally Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. The move drew immediate disapproval from both the BJP and Congress leaderships at the state level.

Following the 20 December polls to the 60-member council, Shiv Sena emerged as the single largest party with 27 seats, four short of a majority. The BJP won 14 seats, Congress 12, NCP four and two independents were elected. With the backing of one independent, the three-party coalition crossed the majority mark with 32 councillors.

BJP councillor Tejashree Karanjule Patil was elected council president on Wednesday, defeating Shiv Sena's Manisha Walekar.

However, the Congress responded swiftly, suspending 12 newly-elected councillors and its Ambernath block president Pradip Patil for aligning with the BJP without authorisation. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

PHOTO: AI

- The BJP won 14 seats, Congress 12, NCP four and two independents were elected. With the backing of one independent, the three-party coalition crossed the majority mark with 32

Only thing missing is counselling for dogs: SC

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

"Now the only thing left is to provide counselling to dogs so they do not bite," the Supreme Court remarked on Wednesday as it resumed hearings on the nationwide stray dog menace, observing that no one can read an animal's mind when it is in a mood to attack. Reviewing compliance with its 7 November 2025 order, the court noted that stray dogs were to be removed from schools, hospitals, bus stands and railway stations and shifted to shelters. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

Trump will 'kill' Iran's supreme leader: US Senator

ISTANBUL, 7 JAN

Amid widespread unrest in Tehran in the wake of spiralling economic crisis, the US Senator Lindsey Graham warned that President Donald Trump would kill Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei if the government led by him did not mend its ways. "To the Ayatollahs: you need to understand — if you keep killing your people who are demanding a better life, Donald Trump is going to kill you," Senator Graham told Fox News. Graham said, "To the people of Iran, help is on the way." *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 5 and 6

'Dhurandhar' is highest earning Hindi movie

MUMBAI, 7 JAN

Aditya Dhar's 'Dhurandhar' has become the highest-earning Hindi film ever, with a nett India collection of over Rs 831 crore. The Ranveer Singh-starrer surpassed the Hindi version of Allu Arjun's 'Pushpa 2': The Rule (Rs 830 crore) and now leads all Hindi releases. The spy thriller, directed and written by Dhar, depicts covert intelligence operations linked to events like the Kandahar hijack, 2001 Parliament attack, and 26/11 Mumbai attacks. Starring Singh, Sanjay Dutt, Akshaye Khanna, Arjun Rampal and others, it has received mixed reviews. *— PTI*

Encounter erupts between terrorists, security in Kathua

JAMMU, 7 JAN

An encounter erupted between security forces and terrorists in a remote village of Kathua district in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, officials said. The gunfight began in the evening at Kahog village in the Billawar area after security forces launched a search operation based on inputs about the presence of two to three terrorists. The operation was carried out in the forest area of Kamadh Nullah. Sources said a terrorist was spotted by locals around 4pm. *—PTI*

BJP woman worker says cops disrobed her; officials deny

HUBBALLI, 7 JAN

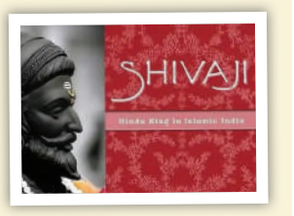
A BJP woman functionary has alleged that police disrobed her during her arrest in connection with an attack on government officials in Hubballi, a charge denied by the police. Hubballi-Dharwad Police Commissioner N Shashikumar said the woman removed her clothes herself and bit four police personnel, including two sub-inspectors, on their abdomen while resisting arrest.

The incident triggered a major controversy after a video showing the topless woman went viral. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah blamed the woman for the episode, while the BJP accused the government of indulging in hate politics.

The case arose from an alleged encroachment of government land in the Chalukya Nagar area of Keshwapur. Revenue officials, accompanied by police, had gone to the site to clear the encroachment and were allegedly attacked by illegal occupants. The woman was named the key accused in the case.

Police said she resisted arrest when a team went to detain her and was overpowered and taken away in a police vehicle. The woman claimed she was disrobed during the process. Shashikumar said women police officers were present, all precautions were taken, and officers repeatedly asked her to wear clothes.

He added that she has nine cases pending and has been remanded to judicial custody. *—PTI*



Oxford apologises for a 2003 book on Shivaji Maharaj

PUNE, 7 JAN

Oxford University Press (OUP) India has issued an apology to Udayanraje Bhosale, the 13th descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, over "unverified statements" in a book published more than two decades ago. In a public notice on Tuesday, OUP acknowledged that certain passages in 'Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India' (2003), written by American author James Laine, were unverified. The book had sparked controversy in 2004 after activists of the Sambhaji Brigade vandalised the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, alleging objectionable remarks about Shivaji Maharaj. OUP expressed regret and apologised for the distress caused. *—PTI*

6-yr-old girl abducted, murdered in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 7 JAN

A six-year-old girl was allegedly abducted and murdered near Whitefield in east Bengaluru, police said on Wednesday. Her body was found wrapped in a plastic bag and dumped in a drain in a migrant colony at Pattandur Agrahara.

The victim was the daughter of a migrant worker from West Bengal. Cops suspect the killing stemmed from a personal dispute involving the child's parents and a neighbour, who is also a migrant from Bengal.

According to the complaint lodged by the girl's father on 6 January, the child went missing on the afternoon of 5 January while playing near their makeshift house. The father expressed suspicion about the neighbour, stating that the man was seen in the vicinity around the time the girl disappeared.

After realising that their daughter was missing, the family searched the area before alerting the police. A search operation was launched, following which the girl's body was recovered from a dry drain. Police said that the child was strangled to death. There were no signs of sexual assault. The suspect is at large, and a manhunt has been launched. *—PTI*

Census 2027: 1st phase of house listings to start from April 2026

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

The first phase of Census 2027-- houselisting operations-- will take place between 1 April and 30 September this year in all states and Union territories over a 30-day period specified by each state and UT, a government notification said on Wednesday.

There will also be an option for self-enumeration to be conducted in 15 days time period just before the start of the houselisting operations of 30 days, said the notification issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). The decadal exercise, which was scheduled for 2021, got postponed due to Covid-19. *—PTI*

SC orders lab test of Biren's 48-minute audio

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed a forensic examination of a 48-minute audio recording alleged to implicate former Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh in the 2023 ethnic violence.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Kumar and K Vinod Chandran ordered that the entire leaked recording, along with all admitted voice samples of the former CM, be forwarded to the National Forensic Science University (NFSU), Gandhinagar, for examination. The court also directed that all voice recordings submitted by the petitioner's counsel be included. The final report is to be submitted in a sealed cover.

During brief proceedings, lawyer Prashant Bhushan, representing the petitioner Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust, noted that the matter had been listed about 10 times. He added that the petition already contained a transcript of the full 48-minute conversation and that the audio had been supplied. Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Manipur government, stated that the state received the complete recording only after the last hearing. *— PTI*

DKS, BAGHEL APPOINTED AS ASSAM POLL OBSERVERS

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Congress on Wednesday appointed Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and former Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel as senior party observers for the Assam Assembly polls, while former Rajasthan deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot has been named as a senior observer for the election in Kerala.

Karnataka Minister KJ George, Rajya Sabha MP Imran Pratapgarhi and party leader Kanhaiya Kumar have been appointed as observers for the Kerala Assembly polls, along with Pilot.

For the Tamil Nadu and Puducherry Assembly polls, senior party leader Mukul Wasnik and Telangana minister Uttam Kumar Reddy have been made senior observers, along with Qazi Mohammad Nizamuddin. *—PTI*

AHEAD OF POLLS

6.5 cr voters removed from draft rolls of 9 states, 3 UTs

A woman fills a form as part of a process under SIR of the electoral rolls, in Nadia, Bengal ***PHOTO: PTI***

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

The names of 6.5 crore electors have been removed from the draft electoral rolls of nine states and three Union Territories published so far, as part of the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) being carried out by the Election Commission.

Before Phase 2 of the SIR, which commenced on 27 October, the 12 states and UTs had 50.90 crore electors. After the separate draft rolls were published, the number of electors dwindled to 44.40 crore.

EC officials said the names of those removed from the draft rolls have been put in the 'ASD' or absent, shifted and dead/duplicate category.

The draft electoral roll for Uttar Pradesh, published on Tuesday after the SIR exercise, excluded 2.89 crore voters and retained 12.55 crore.

The 2.89 crore voters, or 18.70 per cent, of the 15.44 crore listed earlier could not be included in the draft list due to deaths, permanent migration or multiple registrations, he said at a press conference.

Phase II of the SIR began in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Puducherry, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal on November 4.

In Assam, a separate 'special revision' of electoral rolls is in progress. *—PTI*

EC serves SIR notice to Amartya for 16 Jan hearing

KOLKATA, 7 JAN

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

The Election Commission on Wednesday served a notice to Nobel laureate Amartya Sen in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal, seeking a hearing of the 92-year-old economist on 16 January at his residence, an official said.

As Sen is currently abroad, the notice was served on a member of his family at Santiniketan in Bolpur, where his ancestral home is located. Sen's cousin acknowledged receipt of the notice and said the academic would be informed.

Clarifying reports of multiple notices, a senior official in the office of the West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer said only one notice had been issued. "Certain logical discrepancies were found in the enumeration form submitted by Prof Sen," the official said.

According to the EC, the notice was generated during the SIR process after the age difference between Sen and his mother, as recorded in the form, was found to be less than 15 years.

The development triggered a political row, with the Trinamool Congress calling it a "shameful farce". TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee alleged that issuing SIR notices to eminent personalities like Sen amounted to "insulting the people of Bengal", a charge rejected by both the BJP and the EC. *—PTI*

Govt transfers DIG, names new SP after Ballari clash

Janardhan releases proof of 'preplanned conspiracy'

BENGALURU/BALLARI, 7 JAN

The State government on Wednesday transferred the DIG of Ballari range, Vartika Katiyar, in what is seen as a move following the recent clash in Ballari.

PS Harsha, IPS, who was waiting for a posting, has now been posted as Inspector General of Police, Ballari Range.

The government, which had suspended Pavan Nejjur as Ballari SP following the incident, has now appointed Suman D Pennekar as the new Superintendent of Police of the district.

"Vartika Katiyar, IPS (KN 2010) Deputy Inspector General of Police, Ballari Range, is transferred with immediate effect and until further orders as Deputy Inspector General of Police, Directorate of Civil Rights Enforcement in the upgraded vacant post," the government notification said, without mentioning any reasons.

Violence erupted in Ballari late on 1 January after supporters of Ballari Congress MLA Nara Bharath Reddy and Gangavati BJP MLA G Janardhan Reddy allegedly clashed over the instillation of Valmiki banner.

DIG of Ballari range Vartika Katiyar was transferred and PS Harsha, IPS, is now the Inspector General of Police, Ballari Range *PHOTO: ANI*

- Although the govt did not provide reasons for the rejig, the move is seen as a follow up to the Ballari clashes. The State had earlier suspended Pavan Nejjur as Ballari SP

The situation turned violent with alleged stone-pelting and firing and Congress worker Rajashekhar was killed in the bullet allegedly fired by a private gunman of Congress leader Sathish Reddy.

Meanwhile, Janardhan on Wednesday alleged that clash was a pre-planned conspiracy and squarely blamed Bharath for the incident.

Janardhan released footage of the clash to show that the alleged firing was carried out using a private gun and was "executed on the explicit instructions of Bharath ".

Rajashekhar was attempting to flee when he was shot at point-blank range, leaving no scope for doubt about intent, Janardhan said. Rajashekhar died instantly.

Holding the legislator directly responsible, Janardhan demanded his arrest. There was no immediate response from Bharat. *—PTI*

ON CM'S RECORD TENURE DAY

Ashoka slams 'borrowing CM' on alleged Rs 93,000 cr loan

BENGALURU, 7 JAN

The BJP on Wednesday called Siddarmaiah the "biggest borrowing CM", citing reports that the State is likely to borrow Rs 93,000 crore in the fourth quarter from January to March.

Accusing the Congress government of "failing Karnataka", Leader of Opposition in Assembly R Ashoka said Siddaramaiah, who also holds the finance portfolio, must realise that history does not honour the hollow record of time spent in office. It will judge the track record of legacy left behind, he said on X.

"Siddaramaiah is not the longest serving CM, but the biggest borrowing CM," he said. "The Difference between a statistic and a legacy is — the title of the longest serving CM is merely a statistic. The title of biggest borrowing CM is a legacy".

Noting that the latest figure is staggering, Ashoka said, "Rs 93,000 crore borrowed in a single quarter – the biggest Q4 loan haul in India. This cannot be called governance; it is the very definition of panic-driven financial management."

This debt surge is driven by a collapsing fiscal structure: borrowing to repay previous loan obligations, borrowing to dangerously fund unsustainable guarantee schemes and borrowing because fundamental economic planning failed, leading to a cash flow collapse, Ashoka claimed.

"When a government is forced to borrow an average of Rs 31,000 crore every month just to stay afloat, it is not a sign of strength, but a clear indicator of fiscal stress," he added. *—PTI*

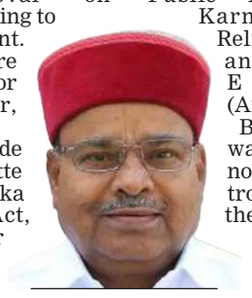
Opposition Leader R Ashoka said that Siddaramaiah's legacy would be his financial mismanagement *PHOTO: PTI*

Governor gives assent to 7 out of 16 bills sent by govt

HUBBALLI, 7 JAN

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot has given his assent to seven of the 16 bills sent by the State government on Wednesday.

Of the seven bills, six got Gehlot's approval on Wednesday, according to the official statement. The 16 bills were sent to the Governor on 31 December, 2025.



The acts that made it to the State gazette are the Karnataka Appropriation Act, Karnataka Labour Welfare Fund (Amendment) Act, Greater Bengaluru (2nd Amendment) Act, Karnataka Private Medical Establishments (Amendment) Act, Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Heritage Area Development Authority (Amendment) Act, Bombay Public Trust (KA) Act, Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments (Amendment) Act.

Bills that are still waiting Governor's nod include some controversial ones like the Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention and Control) Bill and Karnataka Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill.

Other bills, which were talked about but are pending before the Goveror, are the Karnataka State Commission for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Amendment) Bill, Drugs and Cosmetics (Karnataka Amendment) Bill and Karnataka Scheduled Castes (Sub Categorisation in Reservation) Bill.

The Governor has returned the Karnataka Tank Conservation and Development Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2025, to the State government *—PTI*

CHIKKAMAGALURU FATHER FORCES DAUGHTER INTO PROSTITUTION

CHIKKAMAGALURU, 7 JAN

A father allegedly pushed his daughter into a prostitution racket driven by greed. The victim, a minor who managed to escape from captivity, has filed a complaint with the police. The incident was reported from Birur in Chikkamagaluru district.

Her ordeal began when she visited her grandmother's house in December.

Accused Bharat Shetty developed close ties with the girl's father. Claiming that he would offer financial assistance, Shetty's held discussions with the father and invited both the father and daughter to his house in Mangaluru.

The day after they reached Shetty told the minor that four to five men would come and that she would have to have sex with them. Despite her repeated pleas, they raped her. The minor said that they raped her again over the next few days.

She was allegedly reapedly sexually assaulted over a period of time. She eventually escaped. Police have arrested 12 people, including the victim's father, her grandmother, and Shetty. *—Salar News*

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with DyCM DK Shivakumar and others during the inauguration of Medical Science Institutions and other development works, in Haveri, on Wednesday *PHOTO: SALAR*

Will continue as long as I have people' blessing: Longest-serving CM

HAVERI, 7 JAN

Siddaramaiah, who on Wednesday etched his name in history as the longest serving Chief Minster of Karnataka said he has come so far in politics with the blessings of the people.

In his second term as Chief Minister, the 77-year-old Congress leader surpassed D Devaraj Urs' record as the longest serving CM of the State for 2,792 days.

"One has to have the blessings of people to be in politics. With the blessings of the people I have come so far, I don't know how long I will be there (in politics). I have come so far, and will continue in the future too. Will remain in politics until I have the blessings of the people," Siddaramaiah said.

Hitting back at the BJP for claiming that his achievements were zero and that he has emptied the State's coffers, Siddaramaiah said the Opposition leaders are experts in lying.

"Who brought the SCP/TSP (Special Component Plan and Tribal Sub-Plan) act? Did they (BJP) do it? Did they provide reservation in promotions? Who gave Anna Bhagya scheme? How can they say I did not do anything? They should ask people what we have done," he added. *—PTI*

- CM Siddaramaiah surpassed D Devaraj Urs' record as the longest serving CM of the State for 2,792 days. Siddaramaiah said that he was blessed with the people's blessings

NATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL 'BAHUROOPI' TO START ON 11 JAN

MYSURU, 7 JAN

India's renowned national theatre festival, Belli Bahuroopi Bahuroopi, will mark its 25th edition from 11 to 18 January at various venues within Rangayana, Mysuru, Rangayana director Satish Tiptur announced on Wednesday. The festival draws theatre groups and artists from across the country.

The event will be inaugurated twice: by senior theatre artist Baraguru Ramachandrappa on 11 January at Sriranga Mandira, and by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on 12 January at 5.30pm at Vanaranga.

The 2026 edition, organised by Rangayana, carries the theme 'Dr BR Ambedkar – Walk Towards Equality', honouring the leader and emphasising his belief that "freedom of mind is real freedom". The State government has allocated Rs 1 crore for the silver jubilee, up from Rs 25 lakh in 2024-25. The festival will feature 24 stage plays, including 12 in languages such as English, Hindi, Marathi, Tulu, Tamil, and Malayalam, with six performances aimed at children. Venues include Vanaranga, Bhoomigeetha, and Kalamandir.

In addition, 72 stalls will host a book fair, desi food mela, and handicraft exhibitions. *—Salar News*

READY TO FLY

Kites adorn shops in Bengaluru ahead of Makar Sankranti. Set to be celebrated on 14 January, Sankranti is a regional harvest festival *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Driver of Minister Laxmi's son stabbed in mining feud

BELAGAVI, 7 JAN

In a twist to a stabbing incident in Belagavi, police believe that the driver of Mrinal Hebbalkar, son of Women and Child Development Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar, was stabbed due to the latter's opposition to illegal mining. Basavant Kadolkar, 32, was stabbed on Tuesday night on Club Road in Belagavi when Mrinal was shopping at a mall on Tuesday.

Police said that Basavant stepped out of the car when Mrinal was shopping when two assailants arrived on a motorcycle and stabbed him. He sustained severe stab injuries to his chest, shoulder, and several other parts of his body. Basavant was initially given first aid at the district hospital and was later shifted to Vijaya Hospital for further treatment.

Belagavi Police Commissioner Bhushan Borase said that four people have been taken into custody. Although police are ascertaining the exact motives for the attacks, Borase said that they believe that it may be mining related. Laxmi has asked authorities to crackdown on the rampant illegal mining in her constituency. Mrinal also has a stone mining business in the Belagavi Rural constituency. *—Salar News*

'PEACE WAS DISTURBED'

Khelo India athlete booked for stir in Yadgir

YADGIR, 7 JAN

A case has been registered at the City Police Station against Khelo India athlete Lokesh Rathod and activist Punit Raj Kamatagi, among others, on charges of disturbing public peace and obstructing government officials and police personnel on duty during a protest march in Yadgir.

Under the banner of the Kalyana Karnataka Youth Association, a group of 18–20 protesters led by Punit took out a protest march on Monday around 10am and reached the gate of the Deputy Commissioner's office.

The protesters said that although Rs 10 crore had been released by the Kalyana Karnataka Regional Development Board (KKRDB) for the district sports stadium, it has not been utilised properly. They said that the running track has been constructed in a haphazard manner.

They demanded that the assurances given by the Additional Deputy Commissioner during an earlier protest be fulfilled. They also called for a time-bound action plan to address the district's problems and provide solutions. They warned that if no action is taken within seven days, they would file complaints with the Human Rights Commission and the Lokayukta.

(Inset) Khelo India athlete Lokesh Rathod, who has won some 50 medals had earlier protested the mismanagement of the district sports facilities; The Kalyana Karnataka Youth Association led by Punit Raj Kamatagi marched to the Yadgir Deputy Commissioner's office over the demands

According to the complaint filed bt DC office security guard Suresh, the protesters raised slogans against the cops, forcibly opened the gate, and barged into the main entrance of the office. This reportedly caused inconvenience to the public and government employees.

Around 1.20pm, when the Deputy Commissioner came forward to receive the protesters' memorandum, they allegedly spoke in opposition, refused to submit the petition, and continued the protest.

It is further alleged that Punit brought petrol and threatened self-immolate. He also threatened Deputy Commissioner while raising slogans against the government.

The complaint states that during the protest, the accused instigated others, behaved indecently with officials and police personnel on duty. *—Salar News*

3 die in Belagavi sugar factory blast

BELAGAVI, 7 JAN

A boiler explosion at a sugar factory in Belagavi killed three workers and left five others critically injured on Wednesday.

The tragedy occurred at Inamdar Sugar Factory located near Marakumbi village in Bailhongal taluk of the district while repair work was underway on a valve of the boiler installed in Compartment No 1 of the factory.

During the repair, the boiler suddenly exploded with great force, causing hot molli (hot slurry/molten residue) inside the boiler to splash onto the workers. As a result, several workers suffered severe burn injuries at the spot.

Following the explosion, the injured workers were immediately shifted to KLE Private Hospital in Belagavi under zero-traffic arrangements facilitated by the police. Doctors said emergency treatment is being provided, and the condition of some injured workers remains critical.

Meanwhile, the deaths of three workers have been confirmed.

The deceased workers are Akshaya Topade, 45; Deepak Mannoli, 31; and Sudarshan Banoshi, 25.

The remaining five injured workers are undergoing treatment in the intensive care unit (ICU) at KLE Hospital.

Medical officials expect the death toll to increase.

Police have registered a case and launched an investigation to determine the exact cause of the boiler explosion, including whether there was negligence or lapses in safety measures as the labour unions demanded stringent checks.

—Salar News

Inamdar Sugar Factory at Belagavi *PHOTO: SALAR*

- During the repair, the boiler suddenly exploded with great force, causing hot molli (hot slurry/molten residue) inside the boiler to splash onto the workers.

26 naxalites surrender in Sukma of Chh'garh

SUKMA, 7 JAN

As many as 26 naxalites, including seven women, surrendered to police and CRPF officials in Sukma district, Chhattisgarh, on Wednesday under the State's "Poona Margem" rehabilitation programme. 13 of them carried a combined bounty of Rs 65 lakh. The cadres were active in PLGA battalions of South Bastar, Maad, and Andhra-Odisha Border divisions, involved in multiple violent incidents in Chhattisgarh and Odisha. Notably, Lali alias Muchaki Aayte Lakhmu, 35, a company party committee member, had a Rs 10 lakh reward for her role in a 2017 IED blast in Odisha that killed 14 personnel. Four others carried Rs 8 lakh bounties each. Each naxalite received Rs 50,000 as initial assistance, with further rehabilitation planned. *—PTI*

BJP, AIMIM alliance in Akot sparks row

In the 35-member Akot Municipal council, the BJP secured 11 seats, while AIMIM won 2

MUMBAI, 7 JAN

The BJP stitched together a contentious post-poll alliance in Akot Municipal Council in Akola district, joining hands with the AIMIM and several other parties under the banner of Akot Vikas Manch, further intensifying political backlash.

In the 35-member Akot council, the BJP secured 11 seats, while the AIMIM won two, with elections pending in two wards. With support from Shiv Sena (UBT), Shiv Sena, NCP, Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) and Prahar Janshakti Party, the alliance's strength rose to 25 councillors. BJP's Maya Dhule was elected mayor, defeating AIMIM's Firozabi Sikandar Rana, while BJP councillor Ravi Thakur was appointed group leader.

The Akot tie-up drew sharp criticism from political allies and rivals alike. Shiv Sena MLA Dr Balaji Kinikar termed the developments in Ambernath and Akot a violation of "coalition dharma" and said they ran contrary to the BJP's national slogan of a "Congress-mukt Bharat". Sena MP Shrikant Shinde said it was inappropriate to align with parties routinely opposed electorally, adding that "power is not everything".

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis addresses media in Mumbai ***PHOTO: PTI***

- With support from Shiv Sena (UBT), Shiv Sena, NCP, Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) and Prahar Janshakti Party, the alliance's strength rose to 25 councillors. BJP's Maya Dhule was elected mayor, defeating AIMIM's Firozabi Sikandar Rana, while BJP councillor Ravi Thakur was appointed group leader

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut described the BJP's conduct as "frivolous", alleging the party was willing to forge alliances with anyone to capture power.

Sena (UBT) leader Sachin Ahir echoed the criticism, calling the tie-ups proof of the BJP's double standards in politics.

In Akot, BJP leaders claimed defections from the AIMIM. Akola MP Anup Dhotre said four AIMIM councillors had left their party and joined the BJP-led front. However, AIMIM leader and former MP Imtiaz Jaleel rejected the claim, reiterating that his party's political stance remained firmly opposed to the BJP. He sought an immediate briefing from party in-charges.

The developments have deepened strains within alliances and reignited debate over political opportunism and ideological consistency in local governance. *—PTI*

Badlapur assault case whistleblower joins Ajit-led NCP

THANE, 7 JAN

A woman whistleblower who exposed the Badlapur school sexual assault case has joined the Ajit Pawar-led NCP ahead of Maharashtra's civic polls on January 15. Sangeeta Chendvankar, former MNS women's wing leader, was inducted on Tuesday. She rose to prominence after mobilising parents in a case involving assault of two 4-year-old girls. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

RaGa takes swipe at govt over Trump's remarks

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

In the backdrop of US President Donald Trump's remarks on ties with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and tariffs, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday took a swipe at the government, sharing an old video recalling Indira Gandhi's defiance of US pressure in 1971. Trump said Modi was "not that happy" over tariffs imposed on India for buying Russian oil, and claimed Modi sought meetings with him. Posting "Farq samjho, sir ji!" on X, Rahul Gandhi shared a clip alleging Modi "surrendered" after a call from Trump during an India-Pakistan military standoff, contrasting it with 1971. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh mocked the trajectory from "Namaste Trump" to tariffs. Trump cited delays. *—PTI*

Telangana Council accepts K Kavitha's resignation

HYDERABAD, 7 JAN

Telangana Legislative Council Chairman Gutha Sukhender Reddy has accepted the resignation of suspended BRS MLC K Kavitha, effective 6 January, according to a notification issued by the Council Secretariat. Kavitha, elected in 2021 from the Nizamabad Local Authorities' constituency, had resigned on 3 September last year, but the move was kept pending. Speaking in the Council on 5 January, she urged acceptance and attacked the BRS leadership, alleging corruption during its rule, calling the party constitution a "joke" and distancing herself from "unpopular" decisions. Kavitha was suspended in September 2025 after accusing Harish Rao and J Santosh Kumar over the Kaleshwaram project. *—PTI*

M'rashtra Cong VP dies after being stabbed at mosque

AKOLA, 7 JAN

Maharashtra Congress Vice President Hidayatullah Patel died on Wednesday morning after being stabbed at a mosque in Akola district, police said, adding that the accused has been arrested. Patel, 66, was attacked with a sharp weapon around 1.30pm on Tuesday after offering namaz at the Jama Masjid in Mohala village of Akot taluk, allegedly over an old enmity. The former district Congress president suffered injuries to his neck and chest and was rushed to a hospital in Akot, where he was admitted to ICU and later succumbed. Videos showing Patel emerging from the mosque with blood-soaked clothes circulated online. Police reached the spot, collected forensic evidence and formed six teams to trace the attacker. The accused, identified as Ubed Khan Kalu Khan, 22, was arrested at 8 pm from Panaj village. *—PTI*

PM Netanyahu calls Modi; briefs on Gaza Peace Plan status

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday received a phone call from his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu, who shared an update on the Gaza Peace Plan and reaffirmed their shared resolve to fight terror.

"The two leaders warmly exchanged New Year greetings and wished the people of both countries peace and prosperity," a statement from the prime minister's office said.

It said Netanyahu briefed the prime minister on the implementation of the Gaza Peace Plan.

Modi and Netanyahu identified shared priorities to further strengthen the India-Israel Strategic Partnership in the year ahead, guided by shared democratic values, deep mutual trust and a forward-looking vision.

"They reiterated their zero-tolerance approach towards terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and reaffirmed their commitment to fight this menace," the statement said.

Modi and Netanyahu also exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest and agreed to remain in touch. *– PTI*

Jaishankar flags Western hypocrisy during Op Sindoor

LUXEMBOURG CITY, 7 JAN

External Affairs Minister (MEA) S Jaishankar took a dig at Western hypocrisy which was on display during Operation Sindoor in May 2025 and that India is concerned about the developments in Venezuela, marking the first strong public statement after the latest US actions in the South American country.

Jaishankar, while interacting with members of Indian community in Luxembourg on Wednesday, said that countries that are far away say that they get worried if there is tension, but refuse to look inwards at risks in their own region.

He remarked sardonically at the way several countries advise the others on how to deal with their local conflicts, often without thinking.

Jaishankar recounted how during Operation Sindoor launched by India, several countries advised India on how it should conduct itself, and India accepted it as the way of the world and moved on. Earlier on Sunday, the MEA had also expressed concern over Venezuela, calling for a resolution. "It was closely monitoring the developments in the country," he added. *—ANI*

Shah's claim on Hindus' rights in TN blatant lie: CM Stalin

DINDIGUL, 7 JAN

Amit Shah's claims that Hindus' rights are being curtailed in Tamil Nadu are completely false and unbecoming of a Union Home Minister, Chief Minister MK Stalin said on Wednesday, strongly rejecting the BJP leader's allegations.

Speaking at a government function, Stalin said his administration respects all faiths and safeguards religious freedom. "In such a State as ours, the Home Minister's accusation that the rights of Hindus are being snatched away is completely false," he said, adding that divisive attempts have never succeeded in Tamil Nadu.

Stalin asserted that communal harmony would be protected in the future as well. "As long as this Stalin is here, it will absolutely not happen," said the DMK president, referring to any erosion of religious rights.

His remarks came days after Shah, addressing a public meeting in Pudukottai, accused the DMK of repeatedly disrespecting Hinduism and Hindu sentiments. Shah alleged 'atrocities' against Hindus, claiming Hindu forms of worship were insulted and that an unannounced curfew was imposed during the Ayodhya Ram Temple bhoomi puja.

The Union minister also criticised remarks by some DMK leaders comparing Sanatan Dharma to diseases and alleged that Hindu processions and idol immersion events were stayed.

Rejecting the charges, Stalin said Tamil Nadu's record showed consistent protection of religious rights and accused critics of trying to foment division political motives. *—PTI*

PMK Anbumani faction joins NDA ahead of polls

CHENNAI, 7 JAN

Dr Anbumani Ramadoss-led PMK faction joined the NDA on Wednesday, months ahead of TN Assembly polls, after Anbumani met AIADMK chief Edappadi K Palaniswami in Chennai.

AIADMK leads the NDA in the State, which also includes the BJP. "Pattali Makkal Katchi has joined our alliance," Palaniswami said, adding that seat allocation would be announced later.

Anbumani said PMK joined to defeat the "anti-people" DMK and would contest under AIADMK leadership. Citing strong anti-incumbency, he claimed the NDA would win decisively. PMK is split between founder S Ramadoss and his son Anbumani this polls. *—PTI*

'TICKETS FOR MONEY'

AIADMK WARNS AGAINST 'MIDDLEMEN' PROMISING POLL TICKETS

CHENNAI, 7 JAN

AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami has warned cadres against middlemen and scammers promising assembly poll tickets for money, citing inputs that such attempts aimed to tarnish the party.

He urged aspirants not to trust anyone claiming influence, saying tickets would be decided on merit by the Party Election Committee.

Interviews for applicants begin 9 January at party headquarters.

Only those with original application receipts may attend; others were asked to submit forms immediately as assembly elections approach this year. *—PTI*

- He urged aspirants not to trust anyone claiming influence, saying tickets would be decided on merit

HC RESERVES ORDER SEEKING CENSOR PLEA ON VIJAY'S FILM 'JANA NAYAGAN'

CHENNAI, 7 JAN

The Madras High Court on Wednesday reserved orders on a plea seeking a UA 16+ censor certificate for Vijay's film 'Jana Nayagan', scheduled for release on 9 January.

Justice PT Asha heard KVN Productions' petition after the CBFC said certification was kept in abeyance and referred to a review committee following a complaint by a panel member citing 14 scenes needing reconsideration. Additional Solicitor General ARL Sundaresan said the board was empowered to seek a review if issues surfaced later.

Senior counsel Satish Parasaran argued the examining committee had recommended certification and that a single complaint lacked transparency, noting the producer had invested Rs 500 crore. The makers said suggested cuts and dialogue muting were completed, yet clearance was delayed.

Even as certification remains pending in India, the British Board of Film Classification cleared the film for UK release, rating it '15' for violence themes. Directed by H Vinoth, the film stars Vijay and Pooja Hegde. - Agencies

WB BLO dies; family alleges SIR stress

KOLKATA, 7 JAN

A booth-level officer (BLO) in the Malda district of West Bengal died on Wednesday, with her family members alleging that she was under stress due to excessive workload in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the State, police said.

The deceased, identified as Samprita Choudhury Sanyal, had been "unwell for the past few days and was advised to take rest by doctors, but she continued working for the electoral roll revision exercise", her husband said.

"Her condition deteriorated as SIR workload mounted. She died at our residence in the early hours of Wednesday," he said. Sanyal was an ICDS worker and was serving as the BLO of booth number 163 in the Englishbazar Municipality area, a senior police officer said. The deceased was a resident of the Phulbari Pakurtala area, he said. TMC councillor Gayatri Ghosh visited the family and alleged that "excessive pressure during SIR process was affecting the health of BLOs". *—PTI*

Punjab Sarpanch murder: Accused 'gangster' killed in police encounter

AMRITSAR, 7 JAN

An alleged gangster, who was an accused in the murder case of a village head in Punjab's Amritsar, was killed in an exchange of fire with police in Tarn Taran district on Tuesday.

Harnoor Singh, a gangster working with criminal operatives Afridi and Prabh Dassuwal, was one of the accused in the murder case of Sarpanch Jharmal Singh, who was also a leader of the ruling AAP.

The encounter took place in the Bhikhiwind police station area, when teams from the Tarn Taran police and Anti-Gangster Task Force initiated a manhunt on the basis of information.

Police said Singh was riding a motorcycle that did not have a number plate, when he was chased and cornered. When signalled to stop, he allegedly opened fire at the police personnel. In retaliatory action, the accused was killed after being hit by a bullet. *—PTI*

AFTER SC BAIL TO OTHERS

Another 2020 Delhi riots accused seeks parity

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

With the Supreme Court granting bail to five accused in the 2020 Delhi riots conspiracy case, another accused has moved a fresh bail plea before a Delhi court, seeking parity.

The application was filed by Salim Malik, one of the 11 alleged organisers and speakers at anti-CAA/NRC meetings, against whom charges of criminal conspiracy have been framed.

The plea, filed before Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai, argues that Malik faces charges similar to co-accused Mohammed Saleem Khan, who was granted bail by the apex court on 5 January.

It contends that the prosecution's case merely places Malik as a local operative linked to meetings at the Chand Bagh protest site, without material indicating autonomous authority or a strategic role in the larger conspiracy.

Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam are the only accused in the Delhi riots case who did not get any bail ***PHOTO: ANI***

The application says Malik neither acted as a conduit between principal conspirators nor exercised wider operational control.

Malik was allegedly involved in arson at a car showroom in Bhajanpura on 24 February, 2020. The court has listed his bail plea for hearing on 8 January. He has been in custody since his arrest this year.

VHP condemns JNU slogans

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad condemned slogans raised at JNU after the Supreme Court denied bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, calling them "unfortunate" and "cowardly". VHP international president Alok Kumar said anarchy cannot be justified as free expression, noting the court cited evidence of their key role in the riots conspiracy. Welcoming an FIR by JNU authorities, he sought strict action. The university said objectionable slogans and unlawful conduct would not be tolerated on campus. *—PTI*

ANTI-NATIONAL POST: SC GRANTS PROTECTION FROM ARREST TO SINGER

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted interim protection from arrest to folk singer Neha Singh Rathore in a case filed against her over a social media post on the Pahalgam terror attack.

The said comments allegedly targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and the BJP in connection with the killing of 26 tourists in Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir.

A bench of Justices JK Maheshwari and Atul S Chandurkar issued notice to the Uttar Pradesh government and the complainant in the case, and said no coercive steps shall be taken against her.

- The said comments allegedly targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and the BJP in connection with the killing of 26 tourists in Pahalgam in J&K.

The top court directed Rathore to appear before the Investigating Officer and cooperate in the probe.

The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court on 5 December last year had rejected the anticipatory bail plea filed by her. *—PTI*

35 raised slogans, broke barricades: FIR

FIR says the crowd in Delhi snatched and damaged a police loud-hailer despite warning

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

A group of 30–35 people allegedly raised slogans against the police, broke barricades and damaged government property during a court-ordered anti-encroachment drive near the Faiz-e-Elahi mosque in the Turkman Gate area, according to a first information report (FIR) lodged by Delhi Police.

The FIR states that the crowd also snatched and damaged a police loud-hailer despite repeated announcements asking them to disperse. The case has been registered under multiple sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including those relating to obstructing and assaulting public servants, voluntarily causing hurt, rioting, disobedience of lawful orders and joint liability. Provisions of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984, have also been invoked.

Security personnel stand guard outside the Syed Faiz Elahi mosque after the demolition of encroachments on a piece of and adjoining the mosque in the Turkman Gate area in New Delhi *PHOTO: PTI*

Police said the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) cleared around 36,000 square feet of encroached land during the drive, which continued through the night.

Joint Commissioner of Police (Central Range) Madhur Verma said the entire area was divided into nine zones, each supervised by an officer of the rank of additional deputy commissioner of police. He added that adequate police deployment was ensured at all sensitive points.

Verma said several coordination meetings were held in advance with members of the Aman Committee and other local stakeholders to maintain peace and prevent any untoward incident.

According to the complaint filed by Constable Sandeep, police personnel made repeated announcements through a loud-hailer requesting the crowd to disperse. However, the group allegedly refused to comply, continued raising slogans, broke barricades and resorted to rioting.

The injured cops were taken in a government vehicle to LNJP Hospital, where they were admitted and treated.

The FIR states that the complainant can identify several of those involved if produced before him. Additional Commissioner of Police (Central) Nidhin Valsan said the MCD had informed police in advance about the demolition scheduled for the intervening night of January 6 and 7 and sought force deployment to maintain law and order. *—PTI*

Bihar jewellers to deny sales to masked customers

PATNA, 7 JAN

Jewellers in Bihar will no longer sell ornaments to customers with covered faces, the state unit of the All India Jewellers and Goldsmith Federation (AIJGF) said on Wednesday. AIJGF Bihar president Ashok Kumar Verma stated the ban applies to anyone wearing face masks or hijabs, citing security concerns. The measure aims to help identify customers through CCTV in case of theft. The decision follows several robberies, including a Bhojpur heist last March in which goods worth Rs 25 crore and a November robbery in Siwan. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Wild elephant kills 13 in 2 days in Jharkhand villages

CHAIBASA, 7 JAN

An elephant killed 13 people in two days in separate attacks in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district, creating panic in the region, a senior forest official said on Wednesday.

Four others were also injured in the attack by the jumbo, Chaibasa Divisional Forest Officer Aditya Narayan told PTI.

The tusker, which had attacked several people in the last few days, entered the Noamundi and Hatgamariah police station areas late on Tuesday and trampled the six people to death, including four members of a family, he said.

The same pachyderm claimed the lives of seven people, including three members of a family in the Kolhan region on the previous day, Aditya Narayan said. *— PTI*

Tribal woman 'sold' for Rs 3 lakh, 4 suspects booked

PALGHAR, 7 JAN

The police in Maharashtra's Palghar district on Wednesday registered a case against four persons over the alleged "sale" of a 20-year-old tribal woman for Rs 3 lakh under the pretext of marriage and her harassment, an official said on Wednesday. The woman, who belongs to the Katkari community, alleged that she was forced to marry a man from Nashik in May 2024.

The man and his mother allegedly paid Rs 3 lakh to two middlemen, who then trafficked the young woman and facilitated her marriage, the official said, citing the FIR. The complainant said she was physically and mentally tortured by her husband's family and was frequently targeted with casteist slurs. She alleged that her husband assaulted her and deprived her of timely meals when she was pregnant. The woman returned to her mother's house in June 2025 after the birth of her son. The matter came to light on 6 January, when the accused attempted to take her child away, the official said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Murdered woman's body to be flown to India from US

HYDERABAD, 7 JAN

Union Coal Minister G Kishan Reddy said the body of Nikitha Godishala, who was allegedly murdered in the US, is expected to be brought to the country on 7 or 8 January. He said all legal and administrative procedures have been completed. In a post on X on Wednesday, Reddy said, "Sharing an update concerning the unfortunate demise of Nikitha Godishala in USA. All procedures have now been completed, and the body is expected to be flown to India either today or tomorrow." *—PTI*

Cong, AAP told to remove posts linking BJP leader to Ankita

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday directed the Congress and Aam Aadmi Party to remove within 24 hours social media posts linking BJP leader Dushyant Kumar Gautam to the 2022 Ankita Bhandari murder case.

In an interim order passed on a defamation lawsuit by Gautam, Justice Pushkarna also restrained the two political parties from posting any content targeting the BJP Secretary as the alleged "VIP" in the murder case. The court also passed the interim order against other persons, including Urmila Sanawar and Uttarakhand PCC.

Justice Pushkarna said Gautam had made out a case in his favour and if the interim order to restrain the hosting of the "defamatory" content was not passed, irreparable injury would be caused to him. The judge clarified that if the content was not taken down within 24 hours, the social media platform would remove the same. In 2022, 19-year-old Bhandari, a receptionist at the Vanantra Resort in Pauri district, was murdered. The resort owner, Pulkit Arya, and two employees, Saurabh Bhaskar and Ankit Gupta were subsequently arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment by a court.

An audio clip recently released by actor Urmila Sanawar, who claims to be the wife of former MLA Suresh Rathore, said that a 'VIP' is linked to the case. *— PTI*

Severe cold wave likely to grip north Indian states

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

An intense cold wave is likely to grip northern India from today onwards during which the region will experience 'The Great North India ColdBlast' for the next 10 days, an independent weather forecaster and analyst, Weatherman Navdeep Dahiya has predicted.

Taking to X, Navdeep Dahiya advised people to brace themselves for the next 10 days as it will challenge, "The great north Indian Cold blast" of 24 December 2019 to January 2020.

Dahiya said the 'Cold Blast' is likely to impact Punjab, Haryana, North West Rajasthan, and Delhi-NCR.

He also shared a list of cities reporting single digits minimum temperatures like Rajasthan's Churu and Kota at 8.6 and 9.6 degree celsius, Punjab's Amritsar and Patiala at 10 and 9 degree celsius, Delhi at 9.6 degree celsius (2.6 degrees less compared to Monday), Haryana's Rohtak at 9.6; Hisar and Ambala at 10 degree celsius, and Chandigarh at 9.8 degrees.

The weatherman predicted very dense fog is likely in Haryana, Chandigarh, Punjab, Rajasthan & Uttar Pradesh.

Arunachal, Assam & Meghalaya, Bihar, Himachal, Jammu Region, and MP will also have thick fog. *— PTI*

Tourists push their bicycles through dense fog on a cold winter morning in Jaipur, Rajasthan *PHOTO: PTI*

Road mishaps caused by dogs also killing people: SC

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Flagging non-compliances of rules and directions by civic bodies, the Supreme Court said that people were dying not only due to dog bites but also because of accidents caused by stray animals on roads.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta and N V Anjaria, which was hearing pleas on Wednesday for the modification of the SC orders filed by dog lovers and those seeking stringent compliance of orders, said it is conducting the hearing as many lawyers and animal activists claimed that they were not heard before passing of the order on 7 November.

"The roads should be clear of dogs. It is not only the dog bites but stray animals also cause accidents. Civic bodies have to implement rules strictly," the bench said.

Justice Mehta pointed out that two Rajasthan high court judges have suffered accidents in the last 20 days.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the petitioner seeking modification of the earlier order of the court in the matter, said that the solution is not to capture all dogs but to adopt a scientific formula accepted all over the world.

He submitted that the court can adopt the formula of CSVR (Capture, Sterilise, Vaccinate and Release) for controlling the population of stray dogs.

"Prevention is always better than cure," Justice Nath said and pointed out that there was nothing much to argue as the court had only directed to remove stray dogs from institutional areas. The arguments remained inconclusive and would continue on Thursday. *— PTI*

SC to hear wife's plea on Wangchuk's detention today

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

The Supreme Court on Wednesday adjourned to 8 January the hearing of a plea filed by Gitanjali J Angmo, the wife of jailed climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, against his detention under the National Security Act.

A bench of Justice Aravind Kumar and Justice P B Varale deferred the matter.

"Justice Varale wanted to go through this matter," Justice Kumar observed. Advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Sonam, agreed.

The plea claims the detention is illegal and an arbitrary exercise violating his fundamental rights. *— PTI*

Justice Varma opposes LS Speaker setting up probe panel

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Allahabad High Court judge Yashwant Varma on Wednesday opposed in the Supreme Court the setting up of an inquiry committee by the Lok Sabha Speaker to probe the corruption charges against him.

Referring to the provisions of the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968, Justice Varma, represented by senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, told a bench comprising Justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma that if the impeachment motions are moved simultaneously in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha on the same day, then the inquiry committee has to set up jointly by both the houses.

Rohatgi said the motion stood cancelled in the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha Speaker constituted the inquiry committee which is 'non-est' (it is not) in law.

He also assailed the decision of the RS deputy chairperson to reject the motion which was earlier admitted by the chairperson of the upper house.

The question is whether the LS Speaker could unilaterally constitute an inquiry committee when removal motions were initiated in both Houses on the same day, but admitted only in one House, Rohatgi said.

He questioned the constitution of a three-member committee formed by the LS Speaker under Section 3(2) of the Judges (Inquiry) Act. *— PTI*

'AP gas fire will be out in a week'

AMALAPURAM, 7 JAN

The gas well blaze near Irusumanda village in Dr BR Ambedkar Konaseema district will be doused within a week, with the situation fully under control, District Collector R Mahesh Kumar said on Tuesday, citing assessments by ONGC officials.

A massive jet fire, rising nearly 20metres high and spreading about 25metres wide, erupted around 12.40pm on 5 January after a gas leak at ONGC-owned Well Mori-5 near Mori and Irusumanda villages. Officials said the intensity has since reduced sharply.

"In one week, we will be capping the incident. Right now, everything is under control," Kumar told reporters, adding that nearly 95 per cent of the fire's intensity, height and width had reduced since Monday. He said residents evacuated earlier had been asked to return home, assuring them the situation was "completely safe".

ONGC officials said minor flames could persist for four to five days but ruled out escalation. A senior ONGC official said the Maharatna PSU would shortly begin capping operations and that surrounding areas were safe for inhabitants.

A decision on deploying the United States-based well-control firm Wild Well Control will be taken within days. "They are ready with visas and can be mobilised immediately if required," the official said. *— PTI*

Lover, friend held for staging road accident

PATHANAMTHITTA, 7 JAN

What looked like a road accident on a busy evening in this district has now been exposed as a carefully planned crime, driven by obsession and deceit.

Police said a 24-year-old man and his friend staged a scooter accident, injured a woman on purpose, and then tried to pose as her saviour, all to win her sympathy.

The accused are Ranjith Rajan of Mammoodu, Konni, and his friend Ajas, 19, from Payyanamon.

Police said Ranjith was in a relationship with the woman earlier and wanted to regain control over her life.

On 23 December at around 5.30 pm, the woman was riding her at scooter home from Adoor after a coaching class.

As she reached Vazhamuttam East, a car followed her closely. Moments later, the vehicle rammed the scooter from behind. The woman fell hard on the road. The car did not stop.

People nearby rushed to help, shocked by the sudden crash. That was when Ranjith arrived in an Innova car.

He introduced himself as the woman's husband and took her to a private hospital in Konni, presenting himself as a rescuer. But police said the rescue was part of the plan to impress the woman.

The woman suffered serious injuries, her right elbow was dislocated, her little finger fractured, and she had cuts and bruises all over her body, police said.

Once the truth came out, police added the attempt to murder charge also to the case. *— PTI*

No sexual intent: Thane court clears man of stalking

THANE, 7 JAN

A Thane court has acquitted a man accused of stalking and sexually harassing a minor girl, observing that his actions did not demonstrate "sexual intent," a key element required under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

The accused, Mayuresh Kailas Shelke, 25, a labourer, allegedly entered the 15-year-old victim's home in Maharashtra's Thane city in 2019 and declared his 'love.'

Judge Ruby U. Malvankar observed that "there was no physical contact with the victim," and the words used by the accused "per se in the light of the facts of this case would not amount to an 'intent' showing some sort of 'sexual intention'." *— PTI*

'MEN ON MOON BY 2040'

ISRO to launch PSLV-C62 on 12 January

The PSLV-C62 *PHOTO: X/ISRO*

SRIHARIKOTA, 7 JAN

The ISRO is gearing up for its first launch of 2026 with the PSLV-C62 mission scheduled on 12 January from Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh.

An ISRO official said, the primary payload of the mission is the EOS-N1, an imaging satellite built for strategic purposes by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

"The launch PSLV-C62 is scheduled on 12 January at 10:17 hrs IST from the First Launch Pad (FLP), SDSC SHAR, Sriharikota," ISRO said in a post on 'X'.

The rocket will also carry a small probe device, Kestrel Initial Demonstrator (KID), developed by a Spanish start-up, and will remain attached to the PS-4 stage, they said.

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As many as 17 other commercial payloads from start-ups and research institutions across India, Mauritius, Luxembourg, the UAE, Singapore, Europe, and the United States are also manifested for this flight, sources said.

The post said the public can witness the launch from the Launch View Gallery at SDSC SHAR, Sriharikota by registering online on: lvg.shar.gov.in.

The ISRO has asked visitors to keep their Aadhaar card or driving license or any government-issued ID, mobile number and email ID ready for quick registration.

India plans to land its astronauts on the Moon by 2040, former ISRO chief A S Kiran Kumar said in Ahmedabad on Wednesday.

Kumar, who is currently the chairman of the management council of the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), was speaking at the inauguration of the 5th Astronomical Society of India (ASI) Symposium. *— PTI*

HARVEST CHEER

Sugarcane arrives at Bengaluru's City Market ahead of Makar Sankranti, the annual harvest festival celebrated across India on 14 January this year. The festival is observed with regional variations such as Pongal, Lohri and Bihu. Sugarcane stalks, along with jaggery, sesame and other grains, are traditionally used in rituals marking the occasion
PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Delhi's Turkman Gate tense after demolition drive

Shuttered shops, overturned scooters, broken tiles and stones marked the narrow lanes near the Turkman Gate area here on Wednesday, as the locality remained tense and under heavy security following violence during an anti-encroachment drive.

At least five police personnel were injured after some people allegedly pelted stones and glass bottles at the police during the demolition drive carried out on the land adjoining the Faiz-e-Elahi mosque and a nearby graveyard.

From rooftops and from behind locked iron gates, people were seen shouting at security personnel stationed across the area. Children, too, were seen screaming from balconies and behind gates and waving handkerchiefs as they watched the scene below but most residents stayed indoors amid the heightened police presence.

Children were also seen picking up broken rods and loose wires from the roadside, carefully moving the debris left behind by the drive.

The roads, largely cleared of traffic, bore visible signs of unrest, with damaged building tiles, broken glass and stones strewn across several stretches.

Additional forces of the Delhi Police were deployed across lanes adjoining the mosque, with personnel positioned at multiple points to prevent any flare-up.

Barricades were erected at key entry points and all civilian movement was restricted, with only police and Municipal Corporation of Delhi vehicles allowed to pass through the area.

Several people were also seen being put into police trucks and taken away from the area as security personnel continued checking lanes and clearing the stretch.

Most shops in the area remained shuttered, adding to the deserted look of the locality which had a tight security cover.

A local shopkeeper said he kept his establishment closed as a precaution. "We shut everything and stayed inside," he said, pointing to the debris scattered on the road.

Officials oversee an anti-encroachment drive being carried out by MCD as people flee with their belongings near the Syed Faiz Elahi Mosque in Ramlila Maidan area in New Delhi on Tuesday night ***PHOTOS: PTI***

Another local resident said he had been living in the area for 50 to 60 years and described the land adjoining the mosque as a graveyard. "This place is nothing else. I have seen people being buried here over the years," he said, adding that many residents were disheartened by what they saw.

"People were upset by what was done to the graveyard," he said. A local auto driver said rumours spread on Tuesday that the mosque was being demolished.

"In reality, only illegal constructions like shops and other structures were removed," he said, adding that the misinformation led to sudden chaos.

"Things escalated quickly yesterday, but the situation is a little calm now," he said.

Around 30 bulldozers and 50 dumpers were deployed, with over 300 civic workers and officials engaged in clearing encroachments declared illegal by the court. For several residents, the sight of bulldozers and police presence stirred five-decades-old memories, when the Turkman Gate area had become a symbol of the Emergency's demolitions and unrest.

Shahid Gagori, a local who said his family has lived in the area for the past 67 years, recalled how his father was jailed during the Emergency for protesting against the demolition of homes at Turkman Gate.

He said the structures demolished this time stood on land that once had a graveyard.

"The graveyard had been closed even before the Emergency, as it had reached its capacity. During the Emergency, the land was cleared and turned into an open field," he said, adding that the banquet hall and diagnostic centre that later came up there were seen by locals as community spaces.

"We gathered there during Roza and celebrated several occasions. The diagnostic centre was charitable and provided treatment at lower costs," he said. Raghubir Seth, 80, who lived near Turkman Gate during the 1970s and early 1980s, said that while the mosque has existed for decades, the surrounding constructions were relatively new. *—PTI*

SALAR سالار بنگلور

Lucknow, Ghaziabad top in delisted voters after SIR

Lucknow, Ghaziabad, Balrampur and Kanpur Nagar are among the top districts in Uttar Pradesh that have recorded the highest percentage of electors whose forms remained uncollected during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral roll, according to official data.

Districts like Lalitpur, Hamirpur, Mahoba, Jhansi and Chitrakoot in the Bundelkhand region of the state had the least removals from the draft roll.

The draft electoral roll published on Tuesday after the SIR excludes 2.89 crore voters but retains 12.55 crore. The 2.89 crore voters, or 18.70 per cent, of the 15.44 crore listed earlier could not be included in the draft list due to deaths, permanent migration or multiple registrations, UP Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said.

According to district-wise draft roll data published on January 6, Lucknow topped the list with 30.04 per cent uncollected forms, involving about 12 lakh electors.

The district's electorate declined from 39.94 lakh in October 2025 to 27.94 lakh in the revised draft. The uncollected category included 1.28 lakh death-related cases, 4.28 lakh voters marked untraceable or absent, and 5.36 lakh cases of permanent shifting, besides other categories.

Ghaziabad followed with 28.83 per cent uncollected forms, covering about 5.83 lakh electors. The district's total electorate reduced from 28.38 lakh to 20.20 lakh. Of the uncollected forms, around 64,000 were linked to deaths, 3.20 lakh to untraceable or absent voters and 3.60 lakh to permanent shifting, it showed.

Balrampur ranked third with 25.98 per cent uncollected forms, amounting to about 4.11 lakh electors. The electorate in the district declined from 15.83 lakh to 11.18 lakh. The breakup showed around 63,000 death-related cases, 1.60 lakh untraceable or absent voters and 1.33 lakh cases of permanent shifting.

Kanpur Nagar recorded 25.50 per cent uncollected forms, involving about 9.02 lakh electors, as its electorate dropped from 35.38 lakh to 26.36 lakh. The figures included about 1.04 lakh deaths, 3.10 lakh untraceable or absent voters and 3.92 lakh cases of permanent shifting.

Prayagraj stood next with 24.64 per cent uncollected forms, translating to about 11.56 lakh electors. The district's electorate declined from 46.93 lakh to 35.37 lakh. Of these, around 1.74 lakh cases were linked to deaths, 3.67 lakh to untraceable or absent voters and 4.89 lakh to permanent shifting.

Gautam Buddh Nagar ranked seventh among the eight districts, recording 23.98 per cent uncollected forms, or about 4.47 lakh electors. The district's total electorate stood at about 18.65 lakh in the revised draft, with uncollected forms including cases related to deaths, migration and duplication. Agra stood eighth among the districts with 23.25 per cent uncollected forms, involving about 8.37 lakh electors. The district's electorate declined from 36.00 lakh to 27.63 lakh, with the uncollected category comprising death-related cases, untraceable voters and those found to have permanently shifted, according to the data.

Among other prominent districts of Uttar Pradesh, Varanasi had 18.18 per cent of uncollected forms during the SIR, while it was 17.61 per cent in Gorakhpur, 16.35 per cent in Rae Bareli, 18.60 per cent in Amethi, 18.95 per cent in Etawah, 21.57 per cent in Kannauj, 16.37 per cent in Saharanpur, 16.29 per cent in Muzaffarnagar, 18.60 per cent in Aligarh and 19.19 per cent in Mathura.

Lalitpur was the bottom most in the list with 9.95 per cent of uncollected forms followed by Hamirpur (0.78 per cent), Mahoba (12.42 per cent), Banda (13 per cent), Chitrakoot (13.67 per cent) and Jhansi (13.92 per cent).

CEO Rinwa told PTI on Wednesday that the figures are based on the draft electoral roll and are subject to revision following the completion of the claims and objections process till February 6 before the final publication of the rolls on March 6.

Any eligible voter whose name is missing or incorrectly entered can file a claim or objection from 6 January to 6 February, 2026.

Voters can verify their details through their local booth level officer (BLO), the ECINet mobile app, the CEO Uttar Pradesh website (ceouttarpradesh.nic.in), or the Election Commission portal voters.eci.gov.in

If a voter's name does not appear in the draft roll, they must submit Form-6 to seek inclusion. Form-6A for overseas voters Form-7 for deletion or objection Form-8 for correction of details or replacement of EPIC forms can be submitted through BLOs, at Voter Registration Centres (VRCs) located at tehsil offices, or online via ECINet and voters.eci.gov.in *—PTI*

People wait in queues at a centre during hearings under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls, in Balurghat, West Bengal ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Protest-hit Iran warily watches US after its raid on Venezuela

Iran faces a new round of protests challenging the country's theocracy, but it seems like the only thing people there want to talk about is half a world away: Venezuela.

Since the US military seized Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, a longtime ally of Tehran, over the weekend, Iranian state media headlines and officials have condemned the operation. In the streets and even in some official conversations, however, there's a growing question over whether a similar mission could target the Islamic Republic's top officials including the supreme leader, 86-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The paranoia feeds into wider worries among Iranians. Many fear that close US ally Israel will target Iran again as it did during the 12-day war it launched against Tehran in June. Israel killed a slew of top military officials and nuclear scientists, and the US bombed Iranian nuclear enrichment sites. Khamenei is believed to have gone into hiding for his protection.

"God bless our leader, we should be careful too," said Saeed Seyyedi, a 57-year-old teacher in Tehran, worried the US could act as it did in Venezuela.

"The US has always been after plots against Iran, especially when issues like oil, Israel are part of the case. In addition, it can be complicated when it is mixed with the Russia-Ukraine war, the Lebanese (group) Hezbollah and drug accusations."

The US long has accused the Iranian-backed Hezbollah of running drug-smuggling operations to fund its operations, including in Latin America, which the group denies.

'PLEASE PRAY'

Immediately after Maduro's seizure, an analyst on Iranian state television claimed, without offering evidence, that the US and Israel had plans during the war last year to kidnap Iranian officials with a team of dual-national Iranians. Even for conspiracy-minded Iranian television, airing such a claim is unusual.

Then on Sunday night, the prominent Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Javedan warned an audience at prayers in Tehran University that Khamenei's life was in danger.

"Someone said he had a bad dream that the leader's life is in danger," Javedan said, without elaborating. "Please pray."

However, Iran is roughly twice the size of Venezuela and has what analysts consider to be a much stronger military and robust security forces. The memory of Operation Eagle Claw, a failed US special forces mission to rescue hostages held after the 1979 US Embassy takeover in Tehran, also haunts Washington.

After strikes on Venezuela, many in Iran fear that close US ally Israel will target the nation ***PHOTO: AI***

Then there's the political situation in Iran, with its theocracy protected by hard-liners within the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, who answer only to Khamenei. They could launch assassinations, cyberattacks and assaults on shipping in the Mideast, warned Farzin Nadimi, senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy who studies Iran's military.

And crucially, Iran also still has fissile nuclear material.

NOT JUST THE IRANIANS

Others wonder what part of the world the US might take interest in next, while critics have warned about setting a dangerous precedent.

"The regime in Iran should pay close attention to what is happening in Venezuela," Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid posted on social media on Saturday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not directly link Maduro's detention to Iran but acknowledged the protests sweeping Tehran and other cities, saying: "It is very possible that we are standing at the moment when the Iranian people are taking their fate into their own hands."

Hours before the US action in Venezuela, US President Donald Trump warned Iran that if Tehran "violently kills peaceful protesters" the US "will come to their rescue."

On Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei denounced the comments by Trump and Netanyahu as an "incitement to violence, terrorism and killing." US Rep Marjorie Taylor Greene, a Republican who had been close to Trump but resigned Monday after a falling-out with the president, directly linked the Venezuela operation to Iran.

"The next obvious observation is that by removing Maduro this is a clear move for control over Venezuelan oil supplies that will ensure stability for the next obvious regime change war in Iran," Greene wrote on social media.

'MAKE IRAN GREAT AGAIN'

US Sen Lindsey Graham, a Republican, put on a "Make Iran Great Again" hat during a Sunday segment on Fox News. He later posted an image showing him and Trump smiling after the president autographed a similar-looking hat.

"I pray and hope that 2026 will be the year that we make Iran great again," Graham said. Even Saudi Arabia, Iran's longtime rival that reached a Chinese-mediated détente with Tehran in 2023, appeared to be thinking about a possible US intervention in Tehran.

"By dragging Maduro before a US court, Trump sent a message more brutal than the massive bombs his aircraft dropped on Iran's nuclear facilities," Ghassan Charbel, editor-in-chief of the Saudi-owned, London-published Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper, wrote Sunday.

"How devastating it must be for Iran's supreme leader to hear of Maduro's abduction at the hands of American forces." *—PTI*

Bibi calls for calm after Orthodox boy dies in protest

JERUSALEM, 7 JAN

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu urged for calm after a bus driver ran over and killed a teenage boy on Tuesday night during a protest in Jerusalem against a law seeking to draft the ultra-Orthodox community into Israel's military. Video from the protest showed a public bus dragging him for meters before running him over as onlookers jostled and screamed. "I call for restraint to prevent the mood from becoming further inflamed so that, heaven forbid, we do not have additional tragedies," Netanyahu said in a statement. The violence reflected growing tensions between the Israeli authorities and the ultra-Orthodox, known as Haredim, as the government mulls plans to draft them into the military. *—PTI*

Yemeni council expels separatist group's leader

DUBAI, 7 JAN

A Yemeni council fighting Houthi rebels said on Wednesday it had expelled a separatist leader and charged him with treason after he reportedly refused to travel to Saudi Arabia for talks. The Presidential Leadership Council said it had removed Southern Transitional Council (STC) Chief Aidarous al-Zubaidi, marking escalation between Riyadh-backed factions and the UAE-supported STC. Al-Zubaidi's whereabouts were not immediately known, but reports suggested that he had fled Yemen. "The legitimate government and the coalition received intelligence indicating that al-Zubaidi had moved a large force," including armoured vehicles, weapons and ammunition, Saudi-led coalition spokesman Maj Gen Turki al-Malki said. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia launched 15 new airstrikes in Yemen, targeting STC camps, according to STC leader Salah bin Laghir. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Nick to be charged for killing parents Rob, Michele

LOS ANGELES, 7 JAN

Nick Reiner is due to be arraigned on Wednesday over the killing of his parents, Rob Reiner and Michele Singer Reiner, in Los Angeles. The hearing comes three and a half weeks after the celebrated actor-director and his wife of 36 years were found dead with stab wounds in their Brent wood home. Reiner, 32, the youngest of their four children, was arrested hours later and has been held without bail. He faces two counts of first-degree murder with special circumstances. He did not enter a plea at an earlier court appearance. Prosecutors have yet to decide whether to seek the death penalty, while his lawyer has urged against a rush to judgment. *— PTI*

Clashes erupt in Syria between Kurds and army

ALEPPO, 7 JAN

Clashes broke out Wednesday in Syria's northern city of Aleppo after hundreds of people left two predominantly ethnic Kurdish neighbourhoods after deadly violence a day earlier killed at least seven people and wounded dozens. Syria's military gave people until 3pm to leave the neighbourhoods of Sheikh Maqsoud and Achrafieh, after which they would be considered a "closed military area." Once the deadline ended, sounds of explosions were heard. The Syrian Civil Defence said that by noon, around 850 people had left. The latest round of clashes is the deadliest between the Kurdish fighter and Syrian government. *—PTI*

Venezuela will give US 50M oil barrels: Trump

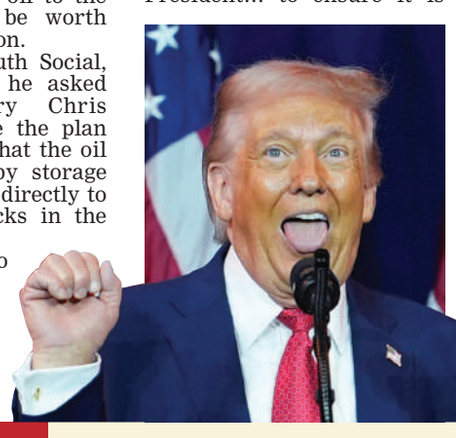
Trump says he will control the $2.8B to ensure it benefits Venezuelans

WASHINGTON, 7 JAN

President Donald Trump claimed on Tuesday that Venezuela would turn between 30 and 50 million barrels of sanctioned oil to the US. This would be worth about USD 2.8 billion.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump said that he asked Energy Secretary Chris Wright to execute the plan immediately and that the oil would be taken by storage ships and brought directly to the unloading docks in the US.

"I am pleased to announce that the Interim Authorities in Venezuela will be turning over between 30 and 50 MILLION Barrels of High Quality, Sanctioned Oil, to the US," he wrote. "This Oil will be sold at its Market Price, and that money will be controlled by me as President... to ensure it is used to help the people of Venezuela and the US!"



Trump had earlier said that oil companies in the US will "spend billions of dollars" to fix the oil infrastructure in Venezuela and "start making money". This comes after the US carried out a "strike against Venezuela", and arrested Nicolas Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores.

China, which has been the biggest buyer of Venezuelan oil, has condemned Trump's announcement as well as the United State's demand that Venezuela give its oil only to the United States and cut ties with China, Russia and Iran. — *Agencies*

I beg you: Trump mocks Macron, Maduro

Trump brazenly mocked French President Emmanuel Macron and deposed Venezuelan president Nicholas Maduro. Trump recounted a conversation he had with Macron where he threatened to impose 25 per cent tariffs on France if they didn't "agree to everything I asked for". Trump claimed that Macron said "Please Donald, don't do that, I beg you." Trump said he replied "most people call me Mr President"

Delcy says no foreign rule in Venezuela

Interim President declares 7-day mourning after US strikes & 'abduction' of Maduro

CARACAS, 7 JAN

Venezuela's interim President, Delcy Rodriguez said that Caracas would not be governed by any foreign power, rejecting claims by US President Trump, who said he needs "full access" to Venezuela.

"The Government of Venezuela governs our country, no one else. There are no external agents governing Venezuela," Rodriguez said in a national address after being sworn-in.

Rodriguez said Venezuelans remain active on the streets, referring to protests demanding the release of deposed president Nicolas Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, who are detained by the US after a military operation.

Rodeiguez said Venezuela had emerged stronger despite recent developments. "We have grown stronger, we have grown spiritually to face the challenges, the attacks, the threats".

She also announced seven days of national mourning following the deaths reported during the US attacks.

"I have made the decision to decree seven days of mourning in honour and glory to the young men and women who died, who gave their lives defending Venezuela, defending President Nicolas Maduro," she said.

Rodriguez also called for the return of Maduro and Flores.

"There is no war here because we are not at war. We are a people, a country of peace, that was aggressed and attacked," Rodriguez added. *—ANI*

Machado says Delsey is Iran and Russia agent

Venezuelan Opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Corina Machado claimed that Rodriguez was an agent of Iran and Russia. Machado also said that she personally is "ready and willing to serve" the country and said that she should be the next Venezuelan leader. Machado was widely recognised as Venezuela's rightful President following the 2024 elections, despite Nicholas Maduro holding onto power.

US seizes two sanctioned Venezuelan oil tankers

WASHINGTON, 7 JAN

The US has seized two sanctioned oil tankers linked to Venezuela in back-to-back actions in the North Atlantic and the Caribbean, officials said Wednesday. US European Command announced the seizure of the merchant vessel Bella 1 for "violations of United States sanctions" in a social medial post.

The US had been pursuing the tanker since last month after it tried to evade a US blockade on sanctioned oil vessels around Venezuela. Despite the ship being empty, Russia deployed naval assets, including a submarine, to protect the ship.

The Secretary of Homeland Security, Kristi Noem, revealed that US forces also took control of the tanker Sophia in the Caribbean. Noem said in a social media post both ships were "either last docked in Venezuela or en route to it." Bella 1 was flagged to Russia and was seized in the North Atlantic, 4,000km from the American coast.

Russia said it was monitoring the situation closely, but did not comment after the seizure.

The US had deployed jets when seizing the ships, and said it would continue to pursue all sanctioned shipping vessels carrying oil — PTI

The Bella 1 is a Russian flagged oil tanker which has been trying to dock in Venezuela **PHOTO: X@SOUTHCOM**

Don't target protesters, target rioters, orders Iran President

TEHRAN, 7 JAN

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian ordered security forces not to target protesters, but instead target rioters.

Vice President Mohammad Jafar Ghaempanah said Pezeshkian had "ordered that no security measures be taken against the demonstrators," and drew a clear distinction with rioters.

"Those who carry firearms, knives and machetes and who attack police stations and military sites are rioters, and we must distinguish protesters from rioters," Ghaempanah said.

Ghaempanah made the announcement speaking to news agency Mehr after a cabinet meeting.

Iran's military chief earlier warned that the country would not allow itself to be threatened by outside powers, after the United States and Israel supported the protests. At least 36 people have been killed and around 1,200 detained during the protests against Iran's falling economy. *—Agencies*

US: Using military to annex Greenland always an option

WASHINGTON, 7 JAN

The White House said that it is considering "a range of options" to acquire Greenland, and that the use of military is "always an option".

"President (Donald) Trump has made it well known that acquiring Greenland is a national security priority of the US, and it's vital to deter our adversaries in the Arctic region," White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a statement on Tuesday. "The President and his team are discussing a range of options to pursue this important foreign policy goal, and of course, utilising the US Military is always an option at the Commander in Chief's disposal."

Leavitt's comments come European leaders pushed back against Trump's threats to take over the semi-autonomous nation. Trump has emphasised that the US needs the mineral-rich island for national security because Russian and Chinese ships are always around, and that Denmark was unable to look after Greenland. Shortly after the strikes in Venezuela, Trump said "let's talk about Greenland in 20 days".

A view of Nuuk, the capital of Greenland. Trump says the US needs Greenland to ensure its own security **PHOTO: XINHUA**

- European leaders emphasised that Greenland belongs to its people, with Danish PM Frederiksen saying that any US intervention would end NATO

However, European leaders emphasised that Greenland belongs to its people, with Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen saying that any US intervention would end NATO. *—ANI*

Inquilab Moncho rejects police chargesheet in Hadi killing

DHAKA, 7 JAN

Slain Bangladeshi student leader Sharif Osman Hadi's party Inquilab Moncho has rejected the police chargesheet in the Hadi murder case and alleged the state machinery was definitely involved in the killing.

Those who "have shed blood" may be forced to "take blood as well" if justice is not ensured, Inquilab Moncho member secretary Abdullah al Jaber said, adding, "even a lunatic would not believe" the claim that Hadi was murdered merely on the instructions of a ward councillor, asserting that the party does not accept the chargesheet submitted by police, the country's Bengali daily Prothom Alo quoted the Inquilab Moncho as saying here on Wednesday.

Inquilab Moncho protesters in Dhaka **PHOTO: FB/ INQUILAB MONCHO**

He said that if justice is not ensured for Hadi's murderers and if "Indian hegemony" is not ended, the people of Bangladesh would decide the consequences. *—PTI*

China bans export of dual-use goods to Japan

BEIJING, 7 JAN

China on Tuesday banned exports of dual-use goods to Japan, citing concerns they could enhance Tokyo's military power, amid heightened tensions over Taiwan, the self-ruled island Beijing claims as its territory.

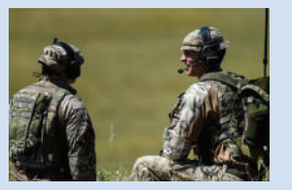
China's Commerce Ministry said exports of items with both civilian and military applications to Japanese military users, or other end-users deemed to bolster Japan's military capabilities, are prohibited.

Japan lodged a strong protest. Foreign Ministry Asia-Oceania Affairs Chief Masaaki Kanai told Chinese Deputy Consul Shi Yong that a Japan-specific measure deviating from international practice and demanded its withdrawal.

China also launched an investigation into imported dichlorosilane, a chemical gas used in making semiconductors.

"The dumping of imported products from Japan has damaged... our domestic industry," the Commerce Ministry said.

Ties have strained since Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said Japan's military could act if China moved against Taiwan. *—PTI*



UKRAINE PEACE: UK, FRANCE PROMISE TROOPS

PARIS, 6 JAN

French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer agreed on Tuesday to deploy their troops to Ukraine in the event of a peace deal with Russia. Additionally, the US for the first time, solidly agreed to the security guarantees.

Macron said officials agreed on ceasefire monitoring mechanisms under US leadership during a "Coalition of the Willing" meeting.

A joint statement said the allies also agreed to continue long-term military assistance and armament to Ukraine's armed forces, which "will remain the first line of defence and deterrence".

Starmer said that the forces would secure "Ukraine's skies and seas, and regenerate Ukraine's armed forces."

Notably, the US envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jarred Kushner backed the security guarantees, noting that when the war ends, it ends forever.

"They are as strong as anyone has ever seen," Witkoff said. *—Agencies*

MOVE TO BLOCK PALESTINE STATE

Israel clears tender to split West Bank into two

JERUSALEM, 7 JAN

Israel has cleared the final hurdle before starting construction on a contentious settlement project near Jerusalem that would effectively cut the West Bank in two. The tender, which seeks bids from developers, will clear the decks for the construction of the E1 project, according to a government tender.

Yoni Mizrahi, who runs Peace Now's settlement watch division, said initial work could begin within the month.

Settlement development in E1 is an open tract of land east of Jerusalem. The contentious E1 runs from the outskirts of Jerusalem deep into the occupied West Bank. Critics say it would prevent the establishment of a contiguous Palestinian state.

Critics say the move would split the West Bank in two, preventing a contiguous Palestinian state **PHOTO: UN**

"The Palestinian state is being erased from the table not with slogans but with actions," Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, a Far-Right politician who oversees settlement policy, had said in August. The tender calls for proposals to develop 3,401 housing units. Peace Now says the publication of the tender "reflects an effort to advance construction in E1.

Meanwhile, Syrian and Israeli officials met on Tuesday in Paris for US-mediated talks aimed at brokering a security agreement. Syrian officials have said their priority is the withdrawal of Israeli forces and a return to the 1974 agreement, while Israel stressed the need to protect the Druze minority in Syria. in Israel. *—PTI*

Rupee rises by 31P, closes at 89.87 against USD

MUMBAI, 7 JAN

The rupee rose 31 paise to close at 89.87 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday on possible intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and a fall in global crude oil prices. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.20 against the US dollar and traded in the range of 89.75-90.23 before settling at 89.87 (provisional), up 31 paise from its previous close. The rupee snapped its four-day losing streak to appreciate 12 paise to settle at 90.18 against the American currency on Tuesday. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.07 per cent higher at 98.65. —*PTI*

Eternal gets GST demand order of ₹3.7 crore

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Eternal, the parent entity of Zomato and Blinkit, has received a goods and services tax (GST) demand order, along with interest and penalty, amounting to Rs 3,69,80,242 for the period April 2019 to March 2020. The order was passed by the Additional Commissioner of State Tax (Appeals), West Bengal. The demand order has been received with respect to short payment of output tax with interest and penalty thereon, Eternal said in a regulatory filing late on Tuesday evening. The company said it believes it has a strong case on merits, and will file an appeal against the order before the appropriate authority. —*PTI*

Coal India arm tracks greenery with AI drones

KOLKATA, 7 JAN

Coal India subsidiary Eastern Coalfields Ltd (ECL) has deployed AI-powered drones to monitor green cover and land reclamation at its Sonepur-Bazari mining area in West Bengal. The initiative uses drone-based orthomosaic mapping, GIS- and GPS-enabled spatial validation, vegetation health checks and ecological surveys for ground verification. High-resolution UAV surveys, combined with geospatial analytics, allow objective evaluation of plantation survival, canopy growth, species composition, spatial distribution and overall restoration success. The study is conducted by the Central Institute of Mining and Fuel Research. ECL said AI & UAV technologies enhance accuracy, scalability and consistency in environmental monitoring, supporting informed decisions for mine closure plan & long-term ecological management. —*PTI*

Cricketer Jemimah invests in helmet maker Tvarra

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Women-only helmet maker Tvarra on Wednesday announced that Indian cricketer Jemimah Rodrigues has come on board as an investor partner. Under the long-term partnership, Rodrigues will actively contribute to shaping the brand's vision, promoting responsible riding, and encouraging conversations around women taking charge of their safety and ambitions, the firm said. "Tvarra aims to build safety thoughtfully, responsibly, and for the long term. Jemimah's discipline, energy and clarity of purpose mirror exactly how we approach this," said Tvarra Founder Alpana Parida. Rodrigues said, "Sport teaches preparation, consistency and belief. Everyday life teaches women the same. Mobility builds confidence. Safety builds courage. Tvarra is building both, which makes this partnership personal to me." —*PTI*

RBI mulls 75% cap on bank dividend payout

A leap from the earlier payout cap limit of 40%

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) proposes to raise the dividend payout cap for banks to 75 per cent of net profit from the earlier limit of 40 per cent. The central bank also proposed that bank boards should comprehensively assess asset quality trends, provisioning gaps, capital adequacy and long-term growth plans before approving any dividend payout.

In a draft set of prudential norms on declaration of dividends and remittance of profits, the central bank has laid down a graded structure for dividend payments based on banks' common equity tier-1 (CET1) capital levels and invited comments from stakeholders by 5 February.

The draft directions, which will come into effect from the financial year 2026-27, will apply to all commercial banks, including the State Bank of India and foreign banks operating in branch mode, but will exclude small finance banks, payments banks, regional rural banks and local area banks.

Under the proposed framework, banks incorporated in India that meet the prescribed eligibility criteria may declare dividends up to 75 per cent of their profit after tax (PAT), subject to capital-linked ceilings. The actual payout will depend on a bank's CET1 ratio as at the end of the previous financial year.

The RBI has introduced a ten-bucket structure under which banks with higher capital buffers will be permitted to distribute a larger proportion of adjusted profits.

Adjusted PAT for the purpose of dividend calculation will be arrived at after deducting net non-performing assets (NPAs) as on March 31 of the relevant year. —*ANI*

Silver hits fresh peak of Rs 2.56L/kg

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Silver prices surged by Rs 5,000 to hit a new record of Rs 2,56,000 per kilogram in the national capital on Wednesday, amid strong safe-haven demand and robust industrial buying, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The white metal closed at Rs 2,51,000 per kilogram on Tuesday. "Silver prices were also driven by sustained buying by the investors and China's export curbs on silver that came into effect from 1 January," an expert said.

Meanwhile, the price of gold of 99.9 per cent purity slipped marginally by Rs 100 to Rs 1,41,400 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes), compared to the previous close of Rs 1,41,500 per 10g.

In the international market, spot gold fell by USD 45.22, or 1.01 per cent, to USD 4,449.87 per ounce. Spot silver was trading lower by USD 2.55, or 3.15 per cent, to USD 78.69 per ounce. —*PTI*

AMID POTENTIAL TARIFFS HIKE

Sensex and Nifty extend losses into 3rd session

MUMBAI, 7 JAN

Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty drifted lower for the third day in a row on Wednesday as geopolitical tensions and renewed concerns about potential US tariff hikes weighed on investor sentiment.

Sustained foreign fund outflows also dragged the markets lower, traders said.

However, buying on select blue-chip counters and lower crude prices in the international market supported equities, they added.

In a volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 102.20 points or 0.12 per cent to settle at 84,961.14. During the day, it dropped 445.85 points or 0.52 per cent to 84,617.49.

The 50-share NSE Nifty went down by 37.95 points, or 0.14 per cent, to 26,140.75.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Maruti, Power Grid, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, HDFC Bank, Asian Paints and Tata Steel were among the biggest laggards.

However, Titan, HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra, Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services were among the gainers.

The BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.47 per cent, and the smallcap index went up by 0.12 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, BSE utilities declined by 0.80 per cent, oil & gas (0.76 per cent), auto (0.68 per cent), telecommunication (0.61 per cent) and realty (0.39 per cent). However, BSE Focused IT jumped 2.52 per cent, IT climbed 1.97 per cent, consumer durables (1.25 per cent), healthcare (0.42 per cent) and capital goods (0.41 per cent). Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.81 per cent to USD 60.21 per barrel. —*PTI*

TITAN Q3 REVENUE SURGES 40% AS GOLD PRICES CLIMB

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Titan Co Ltd, the Tata Group's jewellery and watch maker, reported a remarkable 40 per cent year-on-year growth in standalone revenue for the December quarter of FY26, propelled by rising gold prices. Its jewellery division, which accounts for around 85 per cent of overall business, recorded a 41 per cent increase, driven by higher average selling prices despite flat buyer growth.

Flagship brand Tanishq launched a gold exchange offer, sustaining consumer engagement beyond the traditional festive period. Gold coins sales nearly doubled compared with Q3FY25, while plain gold saw late-thirties growth, reflecting demand for premium, designled pieces. Studded jewellery posted mid-twenties growth, supported by buyer expansion. Titan added 47 new jewellery stores, including 24 Carat Lane outlets, taking its total network to 1,167.

The domestic watch business grew 13 per cent, led by analogue models, while premium Titan watches and budget brands Sonata and Fastrack recorded solid double-digit gains. Eye care sales rose 16 per cent, fragrances 22 per cent, and women's bags 111 per cent due to volume and network expansion. However, Taneira dresswear declined 6 per cent as lower volumes offset price gains.

Internationally, jewellery revenue surged 81 per cent, with strong performances across GCC, Singapore and North America, where Tanishq opened two new stores in Boston and Orlando. —*PTI*

10GW CAPACITY

Tata to set up ₹6,675 crore ingot, wafer-making unit in Andhra

AMARAVATI, 7 JAN

Tata Power Renewable Energy Ltd will set up a 10GW greenfield ingot and wafer manufacturing facility in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh with an investment of Rs 6,675 crore, marking one of the largest solar manufacturing projects in the country.

The proposal was approved by the State Investment Promotion Board, which also cleared the allotment of 200 acres at the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited Kisan Special Economic Zone for the project.

An official release said the facility will be developed in two phases, with 120 acres allocated for the first phase and 80 acres reserved for future expansion.

The plant will manufacture ingots and wafers, critical inputs for solar cells, modules and semiconductor applications, in line with the Centre's push to strengthen domestic manufacturing and reduce import dependence.

The project is expected to generate around 1,000 direct jobs, in addition to significant indirect employment during construction and allied activities.

As part of its clean energy strategy, TPREL will also set up a 200MW captive green power plant to supply renewable electricity to the manufacturing unit.

According to the State government, Andhra Pradesh's availability of ready industrial land, robust infrastructure, port connectivity and assured access to green power were key factors in attracting the investment.

Nellore district is fast emerging as a solar manufacturing hub, with several renewable energy companies planning or executing large-scale projects in the region. —*PTI*

INOX CLEAN ENERGY RAISES RS 3,100 CRORE

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Inox Clean Energy has raised Rs 3,100 crore in an equity funding round diluting around 6 per cent stake to multiple foreign and domestic investors, sources said.

In a statement on Wednesday, the company said it will utilise the proceeds towards achieving the 10-gigawatt capacity target by FY28.

Commenting on the development, INOXGFL Group Executive Director Devansh Jain said, "With its organic growth, recent acquisitions, and global forays, Inox Clean is setting new growth benchmarks and has established a solid base to achieve its medium-term targets of 10 GW of installed IPP capacity and 11 GW of integrated solar manufacturing capacity by FY28."

Inox Clean Energy Ltd, along with its subsidiary Inox Solar Ltd, has tied up equity totalling Rs 3,100 crore, the INOXGFL Group company said without sharing details related to quantum of the stake. —*PTI*

Venezuelan oil revival may keep global prices lower: JP Morgan

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Venezuela could emerge as one of the world's largest new oil suppliers over the next decade if it undergoes a political transition, potentially keeping global crude prices lower for longer, JP Morgan said.

In its Oil Markets Weekly, the bank said a regime change would be a major upside risk to global supply from 2026 onward, a scenario not currently priced by markets. Output of about 750,000–800,000 barrels per day could rise to 1.3–1.4 million within two years and reach 2.5 million over a decade with sustained investment.

US President Donald Trump said interim authorities would hand over 30–50 million barrels of sanctioned oil to the United States, with proceeds controlled by Washington. "This Oil will be sold at its Market Price," he said.

JP Morgan said renewed US engagement could accelerate a recovery, with firms such as Chevron, ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips potentially returning if stability improves.

Short-term disruption is possible, but any output drop during a transition would likely be brief. The bank forecasts Brent crude near $60s in 2026 average. —*ANI*

India's GDP estimated to grow at 7.4% in FY26: Govt

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

The Indian economy is likely to grow at 7.4 per cent in 2025-26, up from 6.5 per cent in the previous fiscal, mainly on account of better performance of manufacturing and services sectors, as per the government data released on Wednesday.

According to the first advance estimates of national income released by Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI), manufacturing and construction are estimated to achieve a growth rate of 7 per cent. —*PTI*

FOR ENTERPRISE USE

Infosys, AWS partner to push Generative AI usage

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

India's second-largest IT services company Infosys on Wednesday announced a strategic partnership with Amazon Web Services (AWS), Amazon's cloud unit, to drive enterprise adoption of generative artificial intelligence (AI).

The collaboration brings together Infosys Topaz and Amazon Q Developer to enhance Infosys' internal operations and drive innovation for clients in sectors including manufacturing, telecom, financial services, and consumer goods.

Infosys Topaz is an AI-first set of services, solutions and platforms using generative AI technologies while Amazon Q Developer is AWS's generative AI-powered assistant.

Sandeep Dutta, President, AWS India and South Asia, said: "The combined strengths of Amazon Q and Infosys Topaz will help organisations innovate, achieve operational agility, and unlock differentiated value for their clients."

Balakrishna DR, Executive Vice President, Global Services Head, AI and Industry Verticals at Infosys said the collaboration with AWS is fundamentally reshaping how enterprise value is created and delivered. "By integrating Amazon Q Developer with Infosys Topaz, we are not just transforming our internal functions, such as development cycles, but also enabling our clients to reimagine critical functions like HR, recruitment, and vendor management," Balakrishna said —*ANI*

Lenovo, NVIDIA unveil new AI Cloud

Lenovo and NVIDIA on Tuesday unveiled the AI Cloud Gigafactory programme at CES 2026, aimed at helping AI cloud providers rapidly deploy production-ready services and improve returns on investment. The initiative enables providers to achieve time to first token within weeks by accelerating gigawatt-scale AI factory builds using pre-integrated components. The announcement comes as Lenovo targets doubling its India business over the next three years. —*PTI*

xAI raised $20B amid Grok row

Elon Musk's AI firm xAI has raised $20bn in new funding, despite mounting backlash over its chatbot Grok creating sexualised, non-consensual images of women and underage girls. The firm is under scrutiny from regulators in Europe and the UK, even as it continues operations. —*Agencies*

'Firms should build AI-ready workforce'

Companies aiming to thrive in the age of AI must move beyond simply buying new technology and instead focus on building an AI-ready workforce, a Google report has underlined. This transformation, the report maintained, requires a holistic AI learning strategy built on five key pillars. —*ANI*

New AI model tracks sleep to predict disease risk

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Researchers have developed an artificial intelligence model that can predict one's risk of developing over a hundred different health conditions using sleep data.

Named 'SleepFM', the model was developed by researchers, including those from the US' Stanford University, and trained on nearly six lakh hours of sleep data, collected from 65,000 participants.

The AI system, described in a paper in the journal Nature Medicine, was initially tested on standard tasks involving sleep analysis, such as tracking different stages of sleep or diagnosing severity of sleep apnoea.

The model was then used to predict the future onset of disease by analysing sleep data, with health record data sourced from a sleep clinic.

More than 1,000 disease categories in the health records were looked at and 130 could be predicted with reasonable accuracy using a patient's sleep data, the researchers said.

Polysomnography -- considered the gold standard in sleep studies -- is a common means of collecting sleep data that uses sensors to record brain activity, heart function, respiratory signals and eye movements, among other aspects.

The AI model was able to incorporate multiple streams of data -- such as electroencephalography (electrical activity of brain), electrocardiography, electromyography (electrical activity of muscles), pulse reading and breathing airflow -- and glean how they relate to each other, the researchers said. —*PTI*

Medvedev extends strong start to season in Brisbane

SYDNEY, 7 JAN

Former world number one Daniil Medvedev extended his impressive start to the season ahead of the Australian Open with straight sets win over Frances Tiafoe in Brisbane on Wednesday.The Brisbane top seed took just an hour to defeat the American 6-3, 6-2, following his equally ruthless first-round win over Hungary's Marton Fucsovics on Monday.Medvedev served superbly against Tiafoe and didn't face a break point in reaching the third round.The 29-year-old Russian has conceded that the world's top two, Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner, are out of reach of the other players on the men's tour.But he also said that anything could happen at a Grand Slam, Australian Open starts on 18 January.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PCB

I am hopeful Shaheen will play T20 WC: Agha

KARACHI, 7 JAN

Pakistan's T20 captain Salman Ali Agha on Wednesday has expressed optimism about Shaheen Shah Afridi's recovery from a knee injury, hoping the fast bowler will regain full fitness in time for next month's T20 World Cup. Afridi has been a key figure in Pakistan's pace attack, and his availability could be crucial for the team's chances in the tournament, being co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka. "We are hopeful he will be fit for the World Cup, but the final decision will come from the (Pakistan Cricket) Board on advice from the medical panel," Salman told. Shaheen's rehabilitation is being supervised by the PCB's medical panel at the High Performance Centre in Lahore. The PCB on Wednesday released a video of the pacer doing rehabilitation.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Soorma dents Bengal Tigers' with narrow win

KOLKATA, 7 JAN

While the JSW Soorma Hockey Club won't be able to avoid the wooden spoon in the Women's Hockey India League despite having received a second wind under interim coach Rani Rampal, its late resurgence may have done the SG Pipers a mighty service. For there's a possibility that the Punjab and Haryana-based franchise may have dented the Shrachi Bengal Tigers' confidence with a 3-2 win ahead of the big final on Saturday at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Stadium here.—*PTI*

Liverpool's Ekitike in doubt for Arsenal clash

LONDON, 7 JAN

Liverpool boss Arne Slot sounded doubtful that he will have striker Hugo Ekitike for Thursday's Premier League trip to leader Arsenal, with the Frenchman yet to return to training following a hamstring issue. Ekitike, who has scored eight league goals this season, missed Sunday's 2-2 draw at Fulham due to what Slot described as a slight injury, and the Dutchman said time was running out for the forward to be ready as Liverpool faces a quick turnaround. "He hasn't trained with us up until now," Slot said. "Let's see if he can train with us today. Two or three days ago, when we played against Fulham, I said he wouldn't be out for long.—*PTI*

ICC willing to address concerns on playing T20 WC in India: BCB

DHAKA, 7 JAN

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Wednesday said the ICC is "willing to work closely" with it to address "security concerns" around the team's participation in the T20 World Cup in India, even though its demand for a change of venue has not yet been accepted.

The T20 World Cup starts on 7 February, and Bangladesh is due to play their four games in Kolkata and Mumbai. "The Bangladesh Cricket Board has receiveda response from the ICC regarding the Board's expressed concerns over the safety and security of the Bangladesh National Cricket Team in India for the ICC T20 World Cup, including the request for relocation of the team's matches," the BCB said in a statement here."In its communication, the ICC has reiterated its commitment to ensuring the full and uninterrupted participation of the Bangladesh team in the tournament. "The ICC has conveyed its willingness to work closely with the BCB to address the concerns raised and has assured that the Board's inputs will be welcomed and duly considered as part of the detailed security planning for the event," it added. Hostilities shot up between India and Bangladesh following Bangladeshi pacer Mustafizur Rahman's ouster from the IPL on the BCCI's instructions. The Board also stated that it was confident of "an affable and practical solution" for the "smooth and successful" participation of the team in the T20 World Cup. Drawn in Group C, the team is scheduled to face the West Indies in their opening match at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata —*PTI*

Ashes: Aussies set for win but Bethell hits sublime 100

England finally has a batsman who understands Test cricket

SYDNEY, 7 JAN

Jacob Bethell posted his first test century Wednesday, and it couldn't have come at a more crucial time for England, ensuring the fifth and last Ashes test will be decided on Day 5 at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

In Jacob Bethell, England finally has a batsman who understands Test cricket

The 22-year-old, Barbados-born allrounder went to the crease in the first over of England's second innings when Mitchell Starc trapped Zac Crawley lbw on the fifth ball. He shared an 81-run second-wicket stand with Ben Duckett (42), 32 with Joe Root (6), 102 with Harry Brook (42), and 45 with Jamie Smith (26) to help England reach 302-8 at stumps on Day 4, a lead of 119 runs. He finished 142 not out from 232 balls, helping England erase the 183-run first-innings deficit and maintain a chance of winning back-to-back tests Down Under. The Australians retained the Ashes with wins in the first three tests, but England is determined to close the gap.

"It was special to get the milestone," Bethell said in a TV interview. "To have the family over ... (and) to top it off with a hundred here is very special."

In just his sixth test, and second of this series, Bethell found a way to survive. At the same time, wickets tumbled around him as allrounder Beau Webster (3-51) emerged as the unlikely star for Australia by taking three wickets with his occasional offspin.

Webster swung momentum back for Australia with two wickets in three deliveries in the 52nd over. He removed Brook, trapped lbw to a ball that turned sharply out of the rough, and Will Jacks, inexcusably hitting out and caught in the deep by a tumbling Cameron Green for a second-ball duck, as England slumped from 219-3 to 219-5.

A crazy run out, first ball after the drinks break in the evening session, saw Jamie Smith (26) sent back by Bethell and well out of his ground when Jake Weatherald threw to Marnus Labuschagne to whip off the bails at the bowler's end.

David Gower Praises Jacob Bethell

Former England cricketer hailed the 22-year-old Jacob Bethell after the Three Lions stars hammered his maiden First Class century on Day 4 of the ongoing fifth Ashes Test against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground in Sydney on Wednesday. Bethell played a fantastic unbeaten knock of 141 runs off 232 deliveries, including 15 fours, which helped England to take a crucial 119-run lead in their second innings in response to Australia's first innings score of 567. "Bethell. Brilliant. Delighted. Nuff said!" Gower wrote on X. Michael Vaughan shared a post on his X handle, hailing Bethell's technique. Vaughan added that Bethell's fantastic knock should be the blueprint for the Three Lions batters in future Test matches.

Stumps England 384 and 302 for 8 (Bethell 142*, Duckett 42, Brook 42, Webster 3-51, Boland 2-34) lead Australia 567 (Head 163, Smith 138, Tongue 3-97, Carse 3-130, Stokes 2-95) by 119 runs. —*PTI*

MALAYSIA OPEN

PHOTO: PTI

Sindhu, Satwik & Chirag make winning start

KUALA LUMPUR, 7 JAN

Returning from a prolonged injury lay-off, PV Sindhu began the new season on a winning note along with the formidable men's doubles pair of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy as they entered the second round of the Malaysia Open Super 1000 badminton tournament here on Wednesday.

The 30-year-old former world champion, who had opted to withdraw from all BWF World Tour events in October last year to recover from a foot injury, defeated Chinese Taipei's Sung Shuo Yun 21-14, 22-20 in a 51-minute showdown of the women's singles opening round. The 18th-ranked Sindhu showed no signs of discomfort as she overcame the lower-ranked Sung for the second time to take her head-to-head to 2-0 and set up a round-of-16 clash with world No.9 Tomoka Miyazaki of Japan.

Miyazaki, a 2022 world junior champion, advanced after her 10th-ranked opponent, Sim Yu Jin of South Korea, retired hurt when the Japanese was leading 21-19, 1-2.

Sindhu has a 1-1 record against Miyazaki, whom she beat in the 2025 China Masters during their last meeting.

Later, Satwik and Chirag, the former World No.1 pair, saw off Chinese Taipei's Yang Po-Hsuan and Lee Jhe-Hue 21-13, 21-15 in 35 minutes to also enter the pre-quarterfinals.

The Asian Games champions, who had reached the semifinals of the season-ending BWF World Tour Finals in December, will face Malaysia's Junaidi Arif and Roy King Yap.The mixed doubles pair of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto, ranked 17th in the world. —*PTI*

Players will need to make 'sacrifices' for ISL clubs to survive: Parth Jindal

BENGALURU, 7 JAN

Bengaluru FC owner Parth Jindal on Wednesday called on the players to "make sacrifices" in view of the "financial burden" the club will shoulder to participate in the delayed Indian Super League (ISL) next month, saying without their support, the club may have to "shut shop for good".

All India Football Federation's (AIFF) bid to rope in a new commercial partner did not find any takers after the Master Rights Agreement (MRA) with the ISL organisers, the Reliance-owned FSDL, ended on December 8 last year.

Though Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Tuesday announced that the delayed and truncated 2025-26 ISL season will begin on February 14 with all 14 clubs participating in it, the franchises will struggle financially if the top-tier tournament does not get a commercial partner soon. The AIFF is expected to float another tender soon for a commercial partner. Jindal did not specifically explain the kind of sacrifice the footballers will be expected to make, but it could well be a reduced salary for this season. The club features, among others, former India captain Sunil Chhetri and star goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu.

The ISL clubs are required to share 60 per cent of the financial cost (around Rs one crore per club) for the league to start after a nearly six-month-long pause. The total cost for the upcoming season has been pegged at Rs 25 crore by the AIFF. "Trem endous sacrifice from all clubs is being asked for to play the ISL in its current format. Repercussions if we don't have a league are very worrying," Jindal wrote on 'X'. —*PTI*

'ATHLETICS LIVE IN MY HEART'

National-Record holder Jinson Johnson announces retirement

NEW DELHI, 7 JAN

Indian middle-distance runner Jinson Johnson on Wednesday announced his retirement from competitive athletics through a social media post.

"As I step away from competitive athletics, I do so with humility, gratitude, and peace. The track taught me discipline, resilience, and respect. Though I retire from racing, athletics will always live in my heart," wrote Jinson, who currently holds the National Record in men's 1500m. The 34-year-old is a three-time Asian Games medallist – gold (1500m) in 2018, silver (800m) in 2018, and bronze (1500m) in 2023.

He represented India in the 2016 Olympics, making him the first Indian man to take part in the 800m race in 36 years, after Sriram in 1980.

The Kerala-born athlete set the current 1500m record (3:35.24) in 2019 at the ISTAF Berlin meet. He is still the only Indian to go under 3:36 in the event. Jinson has also won two medals in the 800m event at the Asian Athletics Championships a silver in 2015 and a bronze in 2017. —*PTI*

WTT Feeder: Senthil beats Bodhisatva

VADODARA, 7 JAN

Senthil Kumar Mehan, a promising defensive specialist, saved three match points to keep his hopes alive of qualifying for the main draw of the men's singles event at the WTT Feeder in Vadodara on Wednesday.

Relying on his excellent control and sharp ball sense, Senthil outlasted left-hander Bodhisatva Chaudhury 11-13, 16-14, 6-11, 11-4, 12-10 in a 37-minute encounter in men's singles qualification Group 13.The contest a clash between Senthil's dogged defence and Bodhisatva's heavy topspin-based attack proved to be a treat for the handful of spectators at the SAMA Indoor Sports Complex.

Despite being repeatedly drawn into long rallies by Senthil's deep backspin returns, Bodhisatva adjusted his strategy midway through the decider and began passing the defender with greater regularity to surge to a 10-7 lead. Senthil, however, showed remarkable composure under pressure. Mixing up his defence with well-timed forehand using long-pimpled rubber, he forced Bodhisatva into a series of errors to claw his way back into the match. —*PTI*

Mandaviya's calls Mohun Bagan, Mohun Began

KOLKATA, 7 JAN

For "Mohun Began... East Began," Mandaviya said, in a press conference before correcting himself to "East Bengal" in a clip that soon went viral. The mispronunciation, phonetically resembling "baigan, the Hindi word for eggplant, drew instant mockery online and sharp political criticism in Bengal.

The TMC accused the BJP-led Centre of being culturally tone-deaf, arguing that misnaming clubs founded in 1889 (Mohun Bagan) and 1920 (East Bengal) was not a minor slip but a metaphor for a larger disconnect with the state. —*PTI*

Gauff drags US into semis as Iga Swiatek also wins

PERTH, 7 JAN

Coco Gauff pulled off double duty to drag defending champion the United States into the United Cup semifinals on Wednesday, while world number two Iga Swiatek did her bit for Poland. Fourth-ranked Gauff, who suffered a surprise defeat last time out, put the United States on its way in its quarterfinal against Greece with a 6-3, 6-2 win over former world number three Maria Sakkari in Perth.

Stefanos Tsitsipas brought Greece level by defeating struggling Taylor Fritz 6-4, 7-5. In the deciding mixed doubles, Gauff teamed up with Christian Harrison to battle past Tsitsipas and Sakkari 4-6, 6-4, 10-8.

The 21-year-old Gauff struggled with her serve as she suffered her first-ever defeat at the United Cup on Monday when she was stunned by Spain's Jessica Bouzas Maneiro.

"Definitely a much better match today," Gauff said after making light work of Sakkari. —*PTI*

PART-TIME HAWKER

Pencak Silat player Raja Das wins KIBG gold

DIU, 7 JAN

When Raja Das is not busy honing his Pencak Silat skills, the 33-year-old helps his father supply ice to local blood banks in Kolkata.

His father has worked for decades as a hawker with Raja assisting him since childhood while pursuing his own dream of finding fame in a sport that is yet to gain a strong foothold in India.

The West Bengal player has been consistently winning medals at the national level over the years, and on Tuesday, he clinched one of the first two gold medals on offer at the Khelo India Beach Games here, beating defending champion and local favourite Prasanna Bendre.

33-year-old Raja Das has clinched one of the first two gold medals on offer at the Khelo India Beach Games
PHOTO: PTI

A commerce graduate, Raja was always fascinated by martial arts and found his calling in Pencak Silat, a traditional Indonesian form of the combat sport. It combines artistic movements with combat techniques.

"Since childhood, I have always been fascinated by martial arts, but never truly liked Karate and Taekwondo. I was more inclined towards choreography, especially weapon choreography, and that's how I landed in the sport.

"After a lot of research, found out Pencak Silat was part of the 2018 Asian Games," Raja, who began training for the sport back in 2017, was quoted as saying in a Sports Authority of India (SAI) press release.

Raja's early ambition took him to Indonesia, where he was part of an advanced training camp ahead of the 2018 Asian Games. —*PTI*